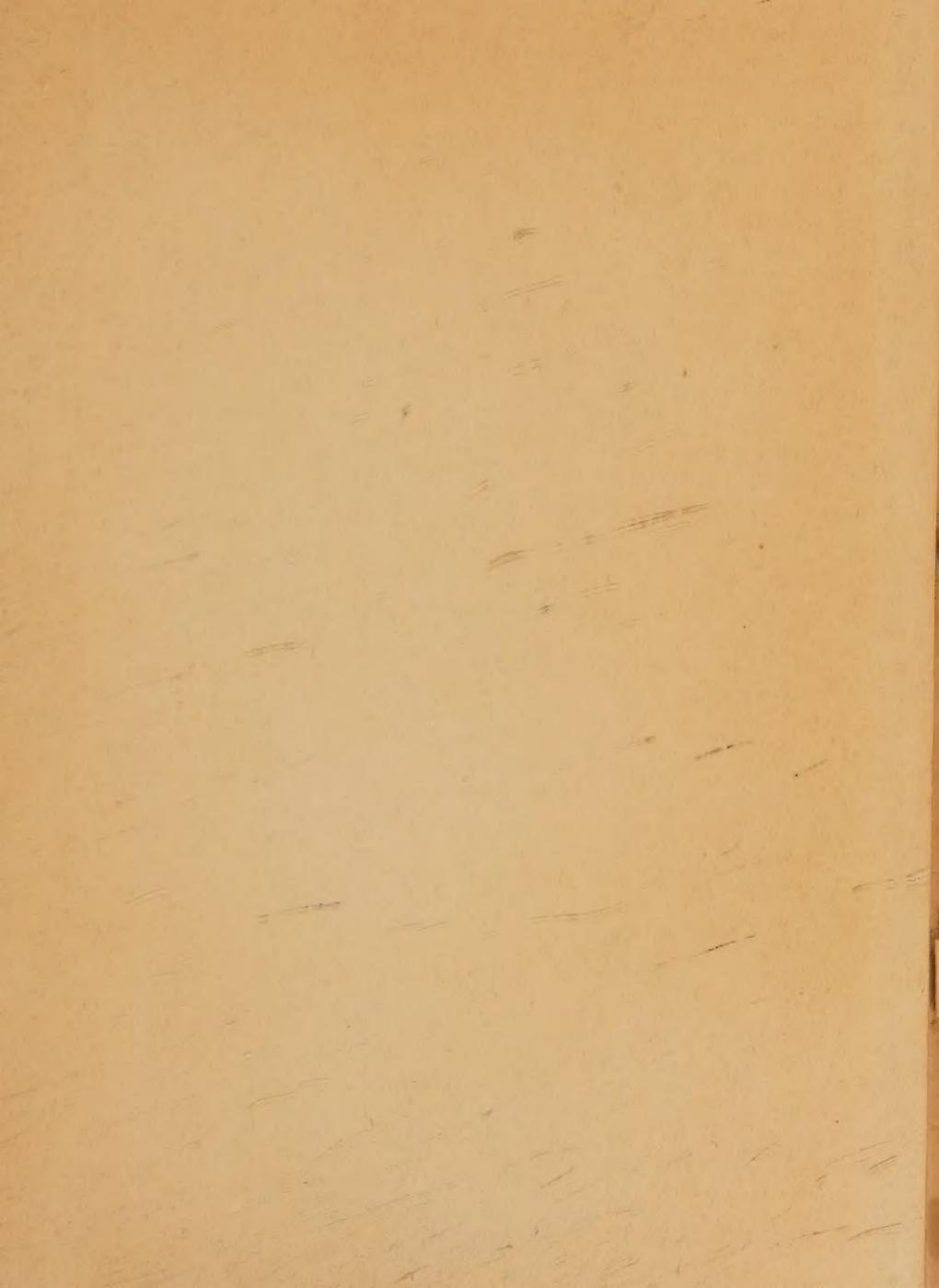


FRONTIER OF THE DEEP

Will Beale





FRONTIER OF THE DEEP

Frontier of the Deep

A Tale of the Great Northeast

BY

WILL BEALE

*The hustling wind has a voice;
The mighty deep a song;
The surging sea calls out to me,
And bids me to be strong,
To live my life, to prove my power,
To conquer and rejoice.*

—Locke.



CHELSEA HOUSE

79 Seventh Avenue New York City

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Frontier of the Deep

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TO
JOHN MOWER BEALE

Author's Note:

There are many St. Anne's in Canada, but the St. Anne's of this story is fictional in every respect.

Majesty, mystery, might inconceivable—that is the sea!

It is the most powerful of all material forces ordained, for it can lay hold on anything created of God or man and crush it, and stamp out the craft in it, and strip it down to its bare bones of beginning. Have you ever thought of it?

And so, as an agent of destiny it is supreme—in its power to build its strength and greatness into the lives of its chosen, or to take the dearest plans in the heart of man and make of them garbled things of unutterable mockery.

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FRONTIER OF THE DEEP



BOOK ONE

THE FOUNDING OF ST. ANNE'S



CHAPTER I

LAND OF SOLITUDES

THIS is the story of human life molded and fashioned all the way through by the governing agency of the eternal sea. It is laid in a region where man was raw material, and where the sea dominates all things: the coast country of eastern Canada—in the north.

Here, along a stretch of frontier facing far-off Newfoundland, the land is bulwarked against the sea as with formidable walls of iron. For many rugged miles does this bulwark stalk along, abruptly terminating the forest solitudes running down to the sea from far in back. The coast here is colossal handiwork of nature in a somber mood.

But at one point in the coast line there is a break. At one point along the bleak, iron reaches, a relenting creative touch, in the beginning, smote a little of softness, a little of contrast, a little of beauty, and gently crumbled the rigorous coast into a tiny realm of toylike havens, of coves and inlets—a veritable playground of the sea.

There was, after all, a touch of expediency in all this. The little haven in the coast represented a real necessity in the scheme of things. Stretching far before it was the mighty Gulf of St. Lawrence, a

vast pocket of the sea that gathered in its depths a teeming wealth of fish from the currents of two oceans. And this spot, with its panorama of sheltered coves, formed a vast spawning ground, wherein, year after year, in solitude undisturbed by man, the sea reproduced its living riches. In the bright spring, when the ice was gone, vast schools of herring swept in from the outlying depths, an endless, onrushing, teeming army. Offshore, following after the schools of herring, came cod—to feed a continent; mackerel, too, countless myriads of silent, black-speeding bodies, streaming in from the cool, green depths of the Gulf.

On the rocks and outlying ledges harbor seals appeared, or dotted the eddies with sleek, glistening bullet heads that gave off swift flashes of sunlight like tiny unplaced lightnings. And birds—gulls, murres, sea pigeons and old squaws—nested in frankly exposed places, or, bickering raucously, eddied up and down the dark faces of the seaward cliffs like wind-blown flurries of sparkling snow.

By the time spring became swallowed up in summer new-generated life filled the waters and peopled the air. Through the summer it grew and developed, each after the manner of its kind, until far into the autumn. Then the silent, icebound winter imposed eternal rest.

In all this country of solitudes, the great living, governing factor was—the sea. Throughout all the ages the sea had imposed its own ordinance on the face of all about, and nature had tempered her functions to its moods and passions. And then into this little haven, a generation or so ago, came man.

The sea remained the same.

But, though great were the changes on shore, the sea seemed to stamp itself with equal calm facility on the new life that now held—the human life—

and came to reflect its moods and passions also in the heart of man.

God himself probably sent the first man into this little region of natural wealth—for the man was a good man, and worthy of his office. But it seems to be a divine decree that new country is broken and brought to its own only through the constant outpouring of hope, and faith, and courage—aye, and of sweat, and blood, and tears—and this little corner of the earth came to manifest all these—came to know deathless faith, deadly strife, bitter disillusionment, and crucified love—and it is of these I write.

CHAPTER II

THE PIONEER

PIERRE LEGÈRE—from up St. Octave country in the province of Quebec—was a man with a vision. For the early years of his life it had been vague and not quite revealed. Pierre had been restless and a wanderer, like many a Frenchman—a heritage, possibly, from constantly fluid ancestors. But later, Pierre's vision took definite form and he knew it for what it was, the urge of the founder—the builder; the craving to take some little corner of God's creation and reclaim it from the raw; to establish life in it himself, and develop it along the lines of his own inner growth. And be it known right here that Pierre's own inner growth was rooted and grounded deep in the matter of—faith.

So Pierre became a wanderer—with a purpose. The remote places called to him always, called to him powerfully of their unspoiled cleanness. And inasmuch as his life had been spent by the water, the sea country was inevitable. So—a matter of twenty or twenty-five years ago—Pierre set forth to find just that combination—of remoteness and sea country. He took his wife and baby, and Jean Co-diac, a half-breed Micmac, and started out from the St. Octave country and journeyed east and south, and finally made the coast.

The coast, where he came out, was a grim proposition. It ran along like a mighty strip of iron and was quite impossible. But he traveled along it undismayed, and one day of sheerest beauty he came out upon the little broken coast country we have

spoken of, and—Pierre Legère stood on a headland transfixed, for, lo! before him his life's vision lay revealed.

From behind him the spruces parted and the half-breed Micmac stepped forth. Legère gripped the Indian's arm tensely with one hand and swept the wonderful scene with the other. Below them the great gap in the sea wall gave inward upon peerless beauty, and even as they gazed down they could see clearly from their great height the teeming manifestation of fish life in the clear green depths below.

They gazed far out. Low around the seaward horizon, as round as a mighty bowl, ran bubbling domes and turrets of clouds—encircling dream structures in burnished grays and slates and pinks, with the sea painted in molten silver. The shining surface was wholly empty. A drifting line of gulls, trailing sinuously down an eddy like strung pearls afloat, wrought white splinters of light from the dropping sunlight. That was all. It was grandeur, and his voice took on a graver note—"the place beyond compare."

Legère stirred. "Virgin coast and rich in its resource," he said as though to himself. "It is the place I have seen in my dreams and I'm coming back to stay, Jean. Here will I found a settlement that in the time to come will open up this region as yet untouched, the land heavy with timber, the sea a spawning ground of riches. And"—his voice took on a graver note—"the place will be my own, Jean—and the life I, Pierre Legère, shall direct."

The half-breed was still staring afar. "There is scarce time in one man's life for all that, m'sieu'."

A big joyous thing sprang into Legère's face as though from sudden recollection. "*Vraiment, mon Jean! Vraiment!* But have I not a son?" He shook his head, and laughed aloud. "A tiny son, Jean, but the world will see!"

Lingeringly he turned away from the sea, made suddenly into the thicket, and the Indian followed.

A few miles inland, camped in the silent wilderness, Legère had left his wife and infant child with two other voyageurs. At nightfall he strode into camp with the air of settled achievement.

His wife, a comely young Canadienne, came gladly to meet him, her child in her arms. Pierre kissed the woman and caught the child to his heart. He knelt with him in the firelight. From his shirt he pulled forth a silver crucifix and dropped it about the child's neck, holding the cross before his eyes. "*Mon petit fils,*" he said solemnly, "a new country has been intrusted to thy father by the good God. As to what will be required in its breaking, who knows? But, with Pierre, thy father, I consecrate thee, also, to its development. *In nomine Deo—*"

The mother knelt devoutly by. The Indian showed somber and immovable across the fire. The fire-light glinted off the silver cross in fitful flashes.

Pierre Legère was a dreamer of dreams. It is the dreamers that upset worlds, and often start grave things which it befalls others to finish.

CHAPTER III

ST. ANNE'S

HAPPINESS! Happiness of creating, than which no joy of life can be deeper or truer; happiness of giving, which is the direct offspring of the first; happiness of loving, of directing, of achieving—all these Pierre Legère experienced to the full in the year that attended the founding of his settlement.

By fall he had his little village already begun. It was located on a little upward slope at the back of a sheltered cove. Spruces, thick, dim-recessed, ran all around the background; before it lay the perfect harbor of the cove, its crinkling waters opening on the sea without.

And his cosettlers? They were men Pierre brought back with him from the home land up in the St. Octave country, four men whom he knew and loved—four men and their families. The rich promise of the spot in the coast filled these, too, with zeal. They attacked the solitudes eagerly, industriously.

Late in September, Pierre and one other made back again to the St. Lawrence country, and Pierre bought a little schooner and loaded it carefully with provender against a long winter. It was an odd little cargo—comprising things assembled with equal regard for the body, and for the soul; for along with salt to cure the fish, and ammunition and seal gear, were the material and sacred things for a place of worship—a little altar, and a little bell which might summon to vespers.

The first winter *was* hard. But the stores of herring they had smoked, of cod they had cured, the

deer and moose and bear they had salted away from the fall carried the men and their families through amply. And Pierre? All winter Pierre was busily at work, busily and silently, with a fervent uplift on his face that no hardship could have assailed. All through the long lonely weeks of persistent ice and snow, from slabs of soft pine, from spruce and hemlock, Pierre was fashioning sanctified things. He had begun on the assembling of his crude little altar; a set of frames to hold the blessed pictures, the stations of the way of the cross; a pedestal which should support the image of the Blessed Virgin. For with the opening of the new season Pierre was to start building the little church that was to crown his labors, and fulfill complete the measure of his dreams.

Spring broke. Within a day, almost, the world sprang to life. The sea burst asunder its vast coverlid of ice. The wild geese came back, streaming upward against the sun like strings of bubbles mounting upward in keen wine. Then came a night when the annual mystery of the Gulf of St. Lawrence was achieved, and the ice disappeared, silently, spectrally, as is the way with this region. Early the next day Pierre Legère broke ground in a little hollow on a spruce clad slope and started his church.

All through the days that followed, life grew apace in the tiny world nestling in the hollow of the coast. Its renown had gone widely forth back up in Pierre's home country, and with the progress of spring, craft bringing men from the home country, from the fishing country up coast and from the regions south, sailed into Pierre's cove, drawn on the mysterious scent of riches. And, already, these planned to establish themselves.

And while the people of a new little town were assembling, Pierre finished his church, and sailed

out from the little cove on an errand of first importance. Late on an afternoon, a fortnight later, he came back. His little schooner was sighted from one of the lofty headlands. Then, from the dim aisles of the forest, from the potato fields, from the fish sheds, and from the cabins, the people of the little hamlet, down to the tiniest babe, came slowly to be assembled together down on the shore.

There was no demonstration when the little schooner made into the cove and came to anchor. There was a deep-running interest, a sober intentness. Women straightened their kerchiefs decorously; men made clean and decent the newest dinghy, and pushed off.

When they landed again Pierre Legère stepped forth and gave a steady hand to the man he had brought back with him. He was a tall man and slight in build, but there was a quiet power shining from his deep-set eyes. He wore the garb of a priest.

He raised a hand in benediction, and the people all around knelt a moment, with bowed heads. Then Pierre spoke. "My friends, I bring to you Father André! No venture, great or small, can live long without the blessing of God upon it. Our little town of the sea is to be my life's work. I have tried to build well, in site, in men, and in faith, and great things are ahead for us. But man must keep close to God in all things. I have consecrated our little town to Him, and to St. Anne, the blessed patron of health and well-being, that we may be spared to make it live. As such it shall be known. Make ready, then, all. To-morrow we will set apart, and this man of God shall consecrate our church and our work."

The priest moved wonderingly among them, his face beaming. "It is glorious, your sea country!"

he said. "Let us try to be worthy of its great benefits."

They ushered him happily to a new little cabin next the church, an austere little place were it not for the loving reverence that had gone into its building and equipment, and then, for the night, Pierre Legère took him to his own household.

A few moments later Pierre stepped out from his doorway. A little band of the men, freed from the gently restraining presence of the priest, hailed him jovially. "*Quelles nouvelles à la cour, Pierre?* What's going on back in the home country?"

He told them. A new parish had been created; the crops had been poor but the fishing fair; there had been weddings, a death; a customs officer had been found murdered near Nons Joli, and the whole section was filled with officers of the crown looking for one Saul Budro, a cutthroat and smuggler, who the good God knew was the worst man in all east Canada.

At the name, a fisherman crossed himself devoutly.

After the evening meal, Pierre and Father André stood on a headland looking out across the sea. The waters were moving cold and gray; the sky was like a leaden bowl turned upside down—there was dark brooding in things.

The priest pointed. "We are returned in good season, my Pierre. It looks like a serious storm."

Pierre stared out somnolently. "It foretells the line gale, perchance, father—the season when the sun crosses the line. It is very late this year." He turned smilingly. "But we are safe here, father. You will see."

CHAPTER IV

CHEATING THE SEA

THE day of consecration opened in stress and storm. For many years the people of St. Anne's looked back upon it as an omen of ill. By nightfall the little cove was a gulf of blackness, a vortex of great winds. Aloft was a constant shrill screaming; below, the sea, too, expressed its agitation hoarsely, and long rolls of deliberate, roaring breakers that simply *were* in the blackness—suddenly, phantom-like—sped shoreward hissing and foaming, and melted into nothingness again in a brawling uproar of displaced shingle. Back from the sea, where the village would be, a single row of four spots of light, the lighted windows of the little church, held unwinkingly in the blackness, and, in a lull, came the chanting of voices from the direction of the lights—men's voices, rich and full, and the quavering treble of women:

"Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes—"

And now, off toward the sea—a presence. Nothing was visible. It was simply that off there somewhere in the maniacal blackness the thing of life, and what is called death, were being rearranged in new relations. The night seaward was filled with it.

Up in the little church the men felt it. The sea breeds in its people an unerring “feel” for its moods, and although it was the first vespers in the little place, men stirred uneasily on their benches.

Benediction, and the men shuffling hurriedly without, made sturdily down the slope to the beach. They could not see off there in the darkness, but more powerful than ever was the *feel* of grave hap-

penings. Suddenly in a lull came something real—a far-distant hail; a moment, and it came again.

Pierre Legère seized a lantern and ran stumbling along the beach to a tiny fish house down one side of the cove. The others followed. Here with fumbling haste they assembled every available lantern, and lit them all. It made a bright illumination that shot a broad white pathway out through the wide doorway and across the water.

And soon *it* appeared. Sagging heavily into the pathway of light came the bulky mass of a wreck-tangled schooner. A hoarse hail reached them plainly now, and against the ghostly white of the sails, smearing the surface like the great, pallid, hovering wings of Azrael, came an almost visionary glimpse of a clinging man's body.

Already Pierre Legère was buckling on some oil-skins, his ruddy face showing collectedly above the dull-glinting black raiment. A man snatched his arm and shouted loud in the uproar. "What use, Pierre? You can't make him before he's on the rocks!"

And Pierre's reply—even, fervent, trustful: "But I can try. This man has been sent by le bon Dieu. Who knows? Perchance his life may mean great things for St. Anne's!" It was a ghastly spirit of prophecy that spoke in Pierre's heart.

They dragged a dory down the beach and into the sea. They clung to it madly, until the rescuer tumbled in and set his oars. The dory surged outward—poised, toppled loftily on a foaming crest, and was gone in the black trough of the sea.

From the shelter of the shed they saw it again, indistinctly, when it labored crazily into the streak of light, now dimmed to a pallid gray by the distance. They saw it topple perilously. They saw it swirled side on to the sea. And they saw the seas roll it over and over in a white sepulcher of spume.

Ten minutes later one of the throng standing tranced, and rigid, and sickened, suddenly leaped free from his spell and pointed out into the wan-lit streak of light. A faintly struggling human mass showed wetly a moment and disappeared. Again it showed, sagged heavily atop a sea, and rolled over. Some one shouted a hoarse man scream of wild exultation. They launched another dory with three men, and made off—toppling, teetering, plunging deep.

And they brought Pierre ashore, Pierre and his man, and bore them both up the beach and into the shed. And after a moment Pierre could stand, weakly, against the hogsheads of salted fish. And somehow he could laugh, weakly, foolishly, a bit hysterically perhaps, as might one who has looked straight into the face of death—and come away.

And the rescued man? He lay face down in a pool of sea water on the floor. They stuck a nail keg under his stomach, and the salt water dribbled thinly out of his mouth onto the planking. And now—

The figure kicked a little—jerkily. Its arms pulled in toward its trunk—slowly, mindlessly, as if the current of consciousness coursing on through their length found all new and untried territory. A leg crawled up, and was angled acutely, tensely. Suddenly the body retched, coughingly, stranglingly, with great sawing gasps between. The man rolled over and sat up.

There was a dead moment of gripping amazement, of startled fear. A man crossed himself precipitately. The nervous twitching grins were wiped off the face of Pierre Legère. The man had turned toward them a black-bearded face, slashed across the cheek, with a furious scar. It was Saul Budro, outlaw, scourge of the Quebec water country—the one man in all Canada no hamlet would have welcomed.

CHAPTER V

THE BORDER WOLF

S~~AUL BUDRO~~ never left St. Anne's except to carry out plans for coming back to establish himself permanently, and when his intention became known a grim barrier fell across the life of Pierre Legère. Saul was a smuggler of caste; a specialist in contraband, goods or human; a man to whom national frontiers from Vancouver to Maine were but negligible considerations, invisible alike to sight and code. He was the border wolf of two countries; he commanded a score of lieutenants and he had a dozen lairs.

But of all his nooks for operations from Quebec down to the Cape Breton coast, St. Anne's had struck him at a glance as supreme. For reasons to appear, his joy at it was fully as thrilling as Pierre's. He came back in May in a strange craft, specially built, carrying a strange cargo, specially selected, and Pierre met him on the bench. Pierre's face shone calm and steadfast, and there was that in his gray eyes not to be held lightly. "Saul Budro," he said, "there is no place for thee or thy traffic in St. Anne's."

"That is for me to prove," Saul grinned. "I find it a place ideal. Your little St. Anne's, hidden away here out of the world, is less than a hundred miles to the border of Maine, through the wilds. That is far shorter than all water, and much less conspicuous. For certain of my cargoes that transport themselves it is ideal. And you, my good Pierre, discovered it for me."

Pierre Legère's face was gray in its sternness. "You shall never fasten on St. Anne's, Saul. I swear it!"

Budro's face darkened. "Look you," he said, "if you go interfering with me or my business I'll make you and your little frontier a roosting place for crows."

All that night the little cove resounded with the echoes of hammering, going on across on the other side from the village. When morning broke, Budro had the framework of a big shedlike building up and well-nigh boarded in. It was an odd building. There were no windows in it. Up under the roof were small squares for light—like portholes. That was all.

That day Budro dispatched two men with axes and a compass into the forest. And all that week a little swarm of the men left behind, under Saul's direction, clambered busily like bees about and all over the place, until the building was finished. It had but one opening—a door down the beach. The day it was done Saul's two other men emerged from the forest and joined the others. Their job in the forest was finished. They had blazed a trail through the sparsely settled country direct to the Maine border. And that night—

Very late, Pierre Legère, from his little window, saw a bright light across the cove. He dressed, slipped around the shore and drew nigh behind the trees. He looked on sinister things. Men in boats were bringing ashore goodly bales that were fabrics, and assortments of small cans that were opium. A lantern hung by the exit from Saul's retreat. And then, one by one, Pierre saw the emotionless yellow faces of Chinese emerge from the building, gleam a moment in the glow like ancient ivory carvings, and, heading toward the forest, file away into the night.

It sickened Pierre—sickened him to his soul. God

had led him to this spot where he might give his life to the development of his ideals; and it was as though a foul bird had perched on his banner. It was not to be!

The final chapter in the founding of St. Anne's—and the most vital one—closes thiswise:

The future of the little place had come to hang entirely on the issue between these two men. Pierre set himself to get rid of the intruder even at cost of life itself, and day after day labored to find a way of doing it.

Meanwhile, Saul fatted on satisfaction, and day after day counted the advantages of his new location. He had made a splendid move. The stuff he got out of the country could be assembled here in absolute secrecy; the stuff he brought in could be brought with laughable openness. Here he had nothing to fear from the States, and here he could snap his fingers at Ottawa; he could be reached only by water, which offered advance notice always.

But here Saul always came coldly to earth in his self-congratulation. All this was possible only so long as the place remained a mere unknown fishing hamlet. If the place grew to a point of prominence—if the natural resources came to be developed and the country opened up, as this damned Legère dreamed, why—

Pierre spent his days seeking an outcome. So did Budro.

The silent warfare grew to a grim intensity. And Pierre had decided on his campaign. He would broadcast the little place far and wide—its wealth, its possibilities. To be sure, it would bring in all sorts and conditions of men, and much life that was riffraff, a consideration which seared Pierre's soul. But it would be better than things as they were. For in a community of some extent they would be

accorded inspectors, patrols—and Budro would be dislodged in the publicity. Pierre was waiting weather to go to Quebec and the mother country. He had every plan laid. And Saul learned of them—all.

It seemed even then that destiny was sowing the seeds of future plans—that the great issues in men and lives that were eventually to attend the development of this little hamlet years later, had their beginning then.

There came a day when Pierre was down on the shore rigging trawls. He strung the last hook, rose and stretched himself and gazed out onto the gray, satiny sea. Offshore a thin film of fog held above the water. The fog had drifted in and out all morning, but now the wind was off, what there was of it. To-morrow he would run his first trawl, but first there was the matter of bait.

He stared critically at the fog offshore a moment and made his decision. He could run out to the Thread o' Life—the grim stretch of ledges so named by one of the fishermen—and try the squid for bait. And then Pierre had an inspiration—it was an impulse that changed history for St. Anne's.

First, he ran up into his little fish house and came out with some sacking. He bailed out his dinghy dry and clean, and spread the dry sacking carefully along the thwart astern, smiling at his plan. Over on his wharf, Saul Budro watched him and wondered in secret. Then Pierre, with all in the little craft made snug and dry, started up the cove for his house.

It was warm in the sunup in Pierre's dooryard. Pierre's wife sat in the low doorway mending a dip net, weaving swiftly across the rent with twine threaded in a wooden shuttle. Pierre's wife was a Canadienne from Montreal. Her forbears had been Irish. She spoke English mostly, but now she was

crooning a happy little nursery rhyme in French patois to the sturdy little boy playing with the twine at her feet.

*"C'est la poulette grise
Qui pond dans l'église—
Elle pondra un beau petit co-co
Pour le petit qui va faire do-do!
Do—diche—o—do—le gros loup va venir bien-tôt."*

Little Davy was a wonder chap now, sturdy and fearless and a marvel of childish beauty. He understood both tongues but, following constant association with his mother, his own conversational beginnings were mostly in English. He looked up as she finished. "Sing Kidd, mahm," he pleaded.

Margaret Legère laughed softly, and chided lovingly: "Ferocious little lamb it is, that wants such bloodthirsty tales!"

Perhaps already the problem of a man's faith, as told in the grim old song, intrigued little David's mind as it came to do years later. "Sing it! Sing it!" he demanded imperiously.

The woman laughed again and began, in English now:

*"My name was Robert Kidd, as I sailed, as I sailed,
And God's law I did forbid, as I sailed."*

She stopped and smiled at her husband striding up from the shore. Pierre clapped his hands merrily before the child. "Thy father goes off to Thread o' Life for bait, son of my heart. Wilt go?"

Would he? The child scuttled indoors eagerly, and he appeared in the door dragging tiny oilskins by the sleeve, his bright little face and sunny hair

incongruously beautiful under a little black sou'-wester.

His mother looked at Pierre uneasily. "The fog is outside, Pierre. I feel strange. I wish ye wouldn't go."

"We'll be back before it makes in, *p'tite maman!*" Pierre made for the squid gear in his little shed.

Meanwhile, across the cove, Saul Budro had roused to sudden action. A sinister impulse had risen to life within him. He jumped down to the beach and moved swiftly to Pierre's boat. He seized the compass from under the stern thwart and hurled it overboard. Then he threw a leg over the gunwale and, pressing steadily with a mighty boot heel, he started a seam down near her stern. There was no one nigh—none save a little lad of eight or ten who had been hunting the beach for lobsters. The boy stood watching, wide eyed, to one side, but Saul hurled him out of his way and made back to his stand.

It was a little later, making offshore, that Pierre Legère noted with some perplexity the water making constantly in the bottom of the boat. "Thy father's boat is like a sieve to-day, little man. Thou must bail and work thy passage." He laughed, but it bothered him.

A little later the child was still laboring manfully with his little rusty bailing dish, but he seemed to make no headway with the swashing water. And now Pierre cast an uneasy look about them. They were surrounded mysteriously by an eerie thin mist—soft, filmy, evanescent, holding the sun above them centered with a silver halo; but ahead it loomed densely, leaden gray. "The fog plays a game with us to-day, little man. Get out thy compass and thou shalt tell thy father how to steer." It was ever a game of delight to the child.

But the compass was not in the stern. Pierre

stepped aft, knelt, and felt all about. Then he sprang back. His weight evidently had started the leak desperately active.

The fog was drifting thick about them now, a cold, gray murk that swallowed sun and distance and direction. They might have been floating in ether, a thousand miles off in space. Pierre seized the oars and began to row, and Pierre knew fear. It seemed as though the tide had swung them around, and he pulled powerfully, as nearly as he could judge, in the direction of the shore.

Suddenly the dinghy struck, with a sudden crash, and water surged in through planks smashed in her bow. They had struck on the ledges themselves. In a fury of action Pierre was out upon the already half-submerged rocks with his son clasped tight to his heart. In the deadly peril of the rising tide matters shot swift through Pierre's mind. There was no time to lose. Ashore they would not be uneasy about him for hours.

He set the child down on a pinnacle of rock still above the surface. He pulled the wrecked dinghy up out of the water. With superhuman strength he strove both with hands and feet and tore out sections of her sides. These he lashed upon the oars with the painter—a frail little raft for a tiny weight. He snatched up his son. He crushed him to his breast. He held him tight. In that one moment Pierre strove to *feel* the little figure with every quivering fiber of his body—with every groping antenna of his soul.

A little while, and Pierre began speaking swiftly. It was all tragically simple, but his eyes still fared about helplessly. There was no way out—the water was already up above his ankles. "The good God hath need for thy father, little son," he said, "but thou—"

The child, staring wide eyed into the deep, earnest

eyes, fell suddenly forward and hugged his father desperately, madly.

Again, and somberly, now. "I am to go. But thou must carry on the work of thy father. Live, little son—live for St. Anne's; live for her, fight for her, die for her! The good God hath given thy father a vision of great things for St. Anne's!"

The water went swaying around and up the man's legs. The sea was going about its making of history calmly, inexorably, chilling the very sources of life with its soulless disregard.

A little, and the man swept sudden tears from his eyes, pointed to the frail raft and laughed cheerily. "Ho, ho, my son! Behold thy brave little ship!"

The child patted his father's cheeks frantically, snatched the bared head in tiny palms, and planted moist kisses on the bearded mouth.

"And see! Such great honor, my little man! Thou alone art captain! The tide will set thee ashore!" Legère laughed again, a tragic mirth.

He set the child down on the raft. He gazed one tense moment into the little face. "Remember, my son! God, and St. Anne's!" He gave the raft a little push.

The child stretched forth his arms pleadingly. A vast upheaval of emotion surged through the man on the rock. He rushed into the sea and caught the child again in a frenzied passion of tenderness. "Dost love thy father?" he gasped in his ear.

The child clung frantically, desperately, until the man disengaged him. Legère pushed the raft away again, and stood erect and now quite calm, his arm upraised. "Till we meet again, my son," he called. "Au revoir!"

The child on the raft waved a palsied little hand. "Au 'voir!"

The fog drifted about them.

And between.

BOOK TWO

THE SON OF A PIONEER

CHAPTER I

DAVID

A YOUNG man, strikingly big and vital and alive among the quiet little appointments about him, stood, hat in hand, just within the door of Father André's little sitting room. In spite of his superb physical bearing there was a reserved restraint, almost shyness, about him.

He spoke hesitatingly, but yet with a youthful eagerness to the man by the fire. "The ice has gone from the sea, m'sieu', and I have come to tell you—my—my great chance has come at last."

Père André looked up from his chair by the fire. Old Barbe, his cook, had left this early-morning caller in the doorway, and was still lingering admiringly in the hall. The priest gazed affectionately at the quiet, boyish face, freshly blond as a young Norseman's. "Thy news is indeed amazing, my David," he smiled. "But"—glancing at the young man's slush-spattered garb which showed that he had been up for hours—"I am of the opinion it can be better told over breakfast and coffee," and in spite of the other's shy remonstrance he moved kitchenward after the retreating Barbe.

Behind him, the young man crossed the room and stood by the mantel. The firelight outlined cleanly the rough garb of the habitant fisherman, and the face above it. In repose it was a face compelling in

its calm, straightforward regard—the outward expression of a nature simple and direct, a nature never as yet stirred in its depths.

For twenty-four years David Legère had lived and developed among the fishermen of St. Anne's. He had become a fisherman almost as soon as he could handle an oar. His earliest recollection was the discovery that things were somehow *different* in the little home left by Pierre Legère—that things were not right. Vaguely it grew upon him that it was not in the proper order of things for men from other homes to be providing much of the fish, the flour, the tea in his own little household, and the man—the provider—was born in him young. He had never failed in it.

For ten years, perchance, this occupied him. Then, he had awakened—awakened to St. Anne's—to himself. First he saw his father's little hamlet, begun a mere half dozen cottages, growing—growing like his own body—his own mind. He saw the little cottages increasing; he saw little shops come into being, and a little schoolhouse for the younger element. On the water, too, he saw growth in things; big craft from down shore made in to St. Anne's to buy fish; craft that, in the passing of time, came to be equipped with gasoline power; craft that overruled the sea to great extent—craft of power.

With all this David Legère came to sense the world outside. And he saw St. Anne's in her relation to the world, and vague things came to awaken within him—living things, restless things. At eighteen he had dragged from his mother the story of his father's life and his father's dreams. Even in its somber setting accorded by his mother's grief he saw the glory of it, felt the fire of it running through his own veins like ardent, burning quicksilver; his father's dream of a town of his own founding, of a community—the salvaging of a little corner of the

earth from the raw of things eternal, and the lifting it up to take a worthy place in and of the world.

To the boy it was epic. And he set himself to study the little world his father had founded, set himself to carry out the work. And in the last two or three years he had come to know for a certainty the one factor that first was necessary to lift the crude little half-forgotten town of the coast up to a place of strength and prominence, the one thing that would——

The priest came in. He looked into the earnest eyes of the young man by the fire, and his own eyes filmed a bit wistfully. “I suppose thy great chance means ‘great’ for St. Anne’s?” he said tentatively. They were fast-bonded friends, he and Legère. Always had he aided him with counsel—with guidance.

“It is of that I came to tell you, Père André. I am going to the Magdalenes for the spring run of herring.”

“Yes?” The priest was gently puzzled. “How? And with whom?” he asked.

David Legère might have been speaking of some great good fortune that had suddenly unfolded at his touch. “A vessel came in here last night from down shore. Two men of the crew had slashed and stabbed themselves out of a berth, and the captain put into St. Anne’s to set them ashore and get two others. I shipped to go, m’sieu’—I and Jo Michelle.”

Père André smiled, still a bit uncertainly. There was still some elusive significance in things that he had failed to grasp, and the young man broke out again unrestrainedly.

“Don’t you see it, m’sieu’? We—we are hired for good wages, and we get, too, a—a share in the herring. It is early for the ice to go, and there will be a big run.” He began pacing restlessly. “It will mean that when I return I can then build my weir—the first sardine-herring weir on this coast, for it

seems that in its herring alone lies the future of St. Anne's. It will mean that I can fit the weir with a marline, and—and have all in readiness for the summer school that I know for a certainty swarms always on this shore." His voice dropped to a level almost reverent in his youthful fervor, and the halting in his speech vanished in his intentness. "It will mean the first step toward opening up this coast as we have always talked; it will mean the canneries; then the railroad down to this coast that my father always dreamed, the one thing needed to make of St. Anne's a place worthy of the life my father gave for it!"

The priest was regarding him with wistful tenderness. He began speaking softly—in French now, the medium of their forbears. "Do you think to do all this alone, my son? It is the work of men ripe in years, in knowledge, and in experience."

The boy was shaking his head in an awed helplessness. "I—I know," he stammered. "And I—I have none of these—not years, not experience, not learning." He glanced vainly around at the books, the prints, the implements of knowledge about him. "But I have a strong body, and I have my father's dream, strong and alive in me, too, m'sieu'. I—I cannot tell you of it, the—the way my father lives in my thoughts. I seem to feel so many, so many *big* things here"—he touched his breast—"that I—that I—" Suddenly he made a gesture of hopeless resignation, the helpless surrender of a soul that cannot express itself. "I—I cannot say all the things within me, but there are times, m'sieu', when—when it scares me!"

"*C'est le bon Dieu, mon fils.*" The voice of the priest firm and level, was charged with conviction. "It is the creator spark, a tiny spark of His own divine nature that the good God implanted in us all. It was ordained in the beginning that each of

us should help on the work of creation, that each should lay hold of some little portion of things created—of men, perchance; of lands, of talents, and through the application of our own little powers to help along the whole.” He stopped a moment while his eyes grew deeper still in their earnestness. “Each and every one of us holds the spark, my son. Some of us”—sadly, wistfully—“sometimes, some of us seem to labor long and with meager return; but there *are* souls who seem to be the elect, who seem to be of God’s chosen, and to such as these—to such as these the little creator spark is as a flaming torch ready to their hands!”

“That’s it, m’sieu’—a torch, a torch! But to me, always ahead! And, m’sieu’, there are times”—David Legère’s eyes were very deep now—“there are times, m’sieu’, when it seems I may not lay hold on the torch—ever.” In the electric hush it seemed that destiny had come to live in the little room.

And then, breathed evenly through the stillness, the speech of the priest went on. “To do all this compasses much. A man must first *be* great, to be intrusted with great things; must first conquer *himself*, ere he may conquer the world. You hold the seeds of great things within you, my son, but you are yet untried. Your manhood still sleeps, but one day it will awake. Can you hold steadfast, do you think?” He gazed on the other now in an agony of yearning compassion. And the boy stared back. Bared in his face was a lifetime’s shy worship of the priest. He was ready to fight the world to hold his regard.

Then, the tension—of a young, untried man baring his gropings with life, and of an older world-tried man looking spellbound upon it—was broken. David Legère laughed in abashed confusion. “I came to ask you, m’sieu’, if you would write for me while I am gone, letters to the net and twine people.

Find out how much it will cost—the marline for the weir, and then, m'sieu'”—the boy grinned sagely—“find out how much less will buy it.”

Père André emerged from his abstraction half reluctantly and smiled back. “Count on me, my son! They shall learn that every dollar of ours to pay has meant many hours of hardest labor, and that we are not to be fleeced.” He rose to his feet. “And now——” He raised a reverent hand and David Legère dropped to his knees before him.

It was impressive; a priest of God, a young untried soldier of life, firelight like a benediction. The little room thrilled. With its homely little appointments, its books of profoundest thought, and its holy things of the ages, the little place thrilled and lived the symbolism of Canada in her remote places; of French Canada and her fishing people; of the little parish of St. Anne’s and a thousand others, where life begins, follows its course, and ends, daily and hourly anchored fast to the guiding spirit of its church—of its faith.

CHAPTER II

HIS FIRST ENEMY

THE earth dazzled with its youth, its spring. Outside, David Legère stood on the doorstep of the little presbytery, and gazed a long, quiet moment at the miracle being wrought by the warm, north-swinging sun. From his place up on the hill-side he commanded the entire panorama of sea and land and sky.

To-day the sun had a diamond quality; the black forests seemed spilled down the heights of sun-smitten snow with the dazzling impress of overturned tar. From where he stood David Legère could hear the jubilant chuckling of a thousand rills of new-released snow water in the spruce-clothed heights up back of him; below, the irregular street of the village seemed an ankle-deep potage of snow-dappled mud. Far off before him the sea was greenly crystal in its new freedom from ice. Its bland silver surface showed a thousand burnished moods—or curious, seeking currents; of new-faring swirls and eddies—as though of reorganization, of reëstablishment.

David Legère strode forth and down into the village. He passed down the broad stretch of land leading abruptly down from the church, on down to the lower level. The little main street of St. Anne's followed a rambling haphazard course along the shore, and in the center of its course around the cove were the stores. There was the huge half empty “company store” of Gowdy, Doan & Robertson, a big maritime fish concern of Halifax. This

was a house with many of the characteristics of the old-time "trading company," which had established itself in every hamlet on the coast. Then there was the village store of Narcisse Comeau; there was the little cobbler shack of Dougal McTavish, a hard and dour Scotsman; there was the smithy of Danny Shane, who forged net bows, iron shoes, and general hardware for fishing craft. There was Felix Dorion, the notary; there was Tamant Boudreau, the little postmaster—these and others, and then the little street dwindled in its commercial rôle and became the roadway of frame houses, then of rough little cottages, then of log shacks, housing the village's quota of Micmaes, and then—the woods.

The most noteworthy store, and by far the most popular, was the shop of Narcisse Comeau, and it was toward this that David Legère made his way.

It was a curious place, the shop of Narcisse! In the course of years it had come to be the abiding place of merchandise almost museumlike in its wide variation. Narcisse carried for sale peppermint sticks in glass jars, and kedge anchors outside the door; hooks and eyes on cards, and complete pickling vats; scented soap, and pork by the barrel. Narcisse catered to the newly born, and the newly dead. In the showcase for notions was an infant's rattle of azure celluloid; and, by the stairs, the sign "*Entrepreneur*" indicated a small array of assorted coffins in the loft. At that, the place was eminently inviting, and was the loafing place of the entire village.

David Legère opened the door, and started back half involuntarily. A wave of tobacco-laden air, robustly tinged with a rank sharpness of spirits, greeted him, and he noted that two men from the schooner lying off the cove seemed the center of a quite unusual hilarity.

The young man edged around to the counter and beckoned Narcisse Comeau. He began trading hur-

riedly for the simple necessaries for his Magdalene run—a heavy shirt, a pair of seine-mits, some “nippers.”

Some one began singing—a familiar voice. Legère’s head came about in surprise. Over behind the stove sat his boatmate, Jo Michelle. Jo Michelle was the big easy-going philosopher of St. Anne’s. He had been a little lad of eight or ten when Pierre Legère, the founder of the village, had passed on. His own father had gone under in a seaman’s brawl about the same time, and Jo, with youthful earnestness, had constituted himself the doglike guardian of Pierre’s son. There had been something strange in the way he watched over him all his early life. Now Jo was quite drunk. And he was singing buoyantly, with an encouraging arm waving time:

“A terre, à terre, bon marinier!”

A dozen voices joined in. Across on a barrel, even Dougal McTavish had ventured beyond the scope of his simple utility patois, and was singing lustily in an uncanny French of ferocious burs:

“At turr, at turr, bong ma-ri-nurrrr!”

The song ended stridently in an unholy assortment of keys. One of the strangers, the mate of the schooner, stepped suddenly up on a box and called out: “I challenge for *le jeu de la jambe forte!* A dollar for the man with a stronger leg than mine who can turn me over!”

The man was a big man, tall and heavy-muscled. He would be no mean antagonist in the “game of the strong leg,” and most of his hearers grinned sheepishly and turned away.

Then it was that he saw young Legère standing well along by the door, and called to him: “You, my lad! A dollar if you turn me over! And,” he

laughed encouragingly, "if I win, I'll bet it'll be a dollar well earned!"

David Legère shook his head. In his life in St. Anne's he had taken little part in the games and pastimes of the men, although these were legion.

The man on the chair grinned back, a shade scornfully. "Not afraid, are you, son? With those legs of yours you look like you could turn over a regular *cigale*"—a grasshopper—"as big as you are yourself!"

There was a half-hearted laugh. Then some of the older men interposed to explain courteously. M'sieu' David was—well—he was M'sieu' David, and did not take part in their rough games. He was—different, the son of his father. The mate would know of his father, the man who had founded St. Anne's—

They stopped uncertainly in their confused excuses. David Legère had moved forward. "I am not afraid," he said. "I will try it, m'sieu'."

There was a stir from within the knot. Jo Michelle got up from his box and elbowed through. He pressed young Legère back, grinning amiably at the mate. "No, m'sieu'. This boy, he is too green. See—his legs are yet too lean in the thighs, his back is too flat." He began peeling off his own coat. "But, I—Jo—I will take from you your dollars!"

"*Bon! Bon!*" yelled the crowd. And "Jo Michelle! Jo Michelle! Bravo, Jo!"

The mate turned to the sailor with him. "All right, Sleeth. You referee."

Already was Jo stripped and on the floor, hunching about tentatively with his back and shoulders to find the spot in the worn planking which would grip him most firmly. Then settling to stillness, his body lay along the boards, straight and powerful, his thin shirt and trousers revealing muscles full and round, suggesting the heavy prowess of the ox.

The mate lay down beside him, with his head opposite Jo's feet. Each grasped a steady hand back of the elbow of his opponent, and drew their bodies along past each other until the inside legs, raised in the air, locked together right, with no play either way. Then the other man from the schooner—Sleeth—began to count, sharp and clear in the tenseness: "One! Two! Three! Go!"

A sudden galvanic shock leaped through the two knotted bodies lying on the floor, and the human mass lay striving and quivering in its deadlock as though flooded by a ceaseless voltage of electricity.

A whimpering little mutter of excitement ran through the bystanders. The victor would be the man who by sheer strength of his leg muscles should bend the other's leg backward and downward and turn his body completely over. It was no contest for weaklings. The swelling muscles of the two bodies stood forth under tight-stretched clothing cleanly, powerfully—to magnetize the glance.

At first it seemed Jo Michelle had the advantage easily, and the half-stifled prayers, the almost poetic curses, encouragement of his townsmen, passed about above him constantly. But suddenly, and puzzlingly, Jo seemed to have reached a deadlock with his man. Although he was still surging upon him with terrific force, his body turned no farther.

The man standing above the mate looked about excitedly. "It's a draw!" he cried out loudly. "A draw!"

"Like—hell!" came from the lips of Jo Michelle. He seemed to relax a moment, to gather every atom of strength—to explode against the leg locked in his own with terrific power. The mate's body surged upward and stopped; but, strangely, the man, Sleeth, above him, had tottered.

Something happened. David Legère wheeled about in his place in the dense-packed circle, and scattered

his neighbors away from the men with an almost unconscious sweep of his arm. In the little clear space so formed, the man Sleeth's foot showed planted firmly on an end of the mate's belt at the waist, thus holding the mate's body pinned securely to the floor. Legère snatched the sailor by the throat. "Get off that belt strap!" he ground out. His face was white; his eyes glittered; he flung the man bodily through the crowd to the floor.

Just then Jo Michelle let go again. The mate's body doubled up with terrific celerity, shot over in a complete somersault and fell heavily on its face.

Jo leaped to his feet. The sailor, Sleeth, was glaring fiercely at young Legère. The now-sobered townsmen, lined up protectingly by David's side, were glaring back expectantly. Then Jo Michelle laughed a great laugh. He dragged David away sturdily. "Hold!" he cried out. "These men should be friends! To-day they became shipmates!" He drew the half-dazed young David to the door and passed out.

The sailor watched them go, evilly.

David Legère had made his first enemy—the sailor, Sleeth.

CHAPTER III

GRACIETTE

GRACIETTE DORION went about the morning duties in her little kitchen with a slow abstraction wholly out of keeping with the brightness outside. At times, almost, her demure little figure seemed to droop—wearily, dejectedly.

Graciette was the stepdaughter of Felix Dorion, the notary—the stepdaughter, housekeeper, and many another wage-saving institution; for Felix, for all his air of superior gentility, was known among the people of St. Anne's as being a close man and mean—a craftsman in thrift who would expend his talents lavishly on the paring of a potato. Felix's house was the last house on his side of the cove, but one, that one being the cottage of David Legère. The house was a half-finished, stinted little place. It held the usual two little rooms in the main house downstairs, with a tiny hall between. Over the front door was the high-gabled dormer in the roof, fitted, like a thousand other little houses of the Canadian French, with an upper door in its clapboards. But in this house the matter of the upper adornment stopped there. Felix had never built beneath the gable door the tiny little balcony which completed the upper front of the thousand others. The carpenter had been allowed the gable as a partial concession to tradition, but the door in the gable was closed to any further frivolity by nails.

In the little Dorion kitchen, Graciette wiped her hands nervously, and passed in to the little parlor

window in the front of the house, passed in hurriedly, hopefully, as though she had not left it but a few moments before. Graciette was watching for David Legère.

There had come a time of poignancy in Graciette's life a few years back when she had been ready to die—of loneliness, of hard work, of Felix; for Felix, in a housekeeper, exacted a maître d'hôtel, a valet, above all, a chef, and there were times, when things didn't suit him, that he forgot himself and turned cruel. And then into her life had come David Legère.

The incident was quite commonplace. David had turned in from the road one day, had taken the ax from Graciette's trembling little hands and finished cutting her firewood. Since that day life had changed for Graciette. She never again could be lonely. She had always her blessed thoughts. Hard work was no longer hard work—it was glorified by hope. From the very start Graciette squandered herself lavishly on the boy, while David—David was like a young pilgrim with a life's mission; remote, detached, and, so far, wholly unattainable.

This morning his passing had a double significance to Graciette. She had learned yesterday from old Barbe that he was going away from St. Anne's, and also—he was in danger. She looked for him in both directions, but the street was empty.

Back in the kitchen she surveyed things with a troubled perplexity. The day's bread-rising was at a stage that needed immediate attention, and the old worn-out stove burned but sulkily, smokily in the windless morning. It would take all her attention to get it to bake, and how was she going to be able to watch for David Legère, and—A sudden inspiration brightened the tired flush on Graciette's cheeks. There was the old stone oven out in the yard. It was a bit early to begin using it, but it

would serve a double purpose, for while she was getting it ready she could see every one who passed.

She ran into the woodshed. Notwithstanding the fact that Felix counted every stick, she snatched down kindlings enough to fill her arms completely. She was braving Felix's wrath, but perhaps this would be one of the days when he would not come to dinner. In five minutes the old oven was beginning to steam in all its winter-soaked interstices. In ten it was getting hot.

Graciette ran into the house, brought out the loaves and thrust them into the oven, and in that moment she forgot—all. From where she stood she could see the Legère cottage, and far along, down on the shore, David Legère was landing from his dory. He had rowed around from the village—she had missed him. In the rush of her disappointment something stiffened within her, some fierce little thing of determination that sprang up swift and hard and unbending. She turned and made down the yard.

A few moments later, flushed and wistfully pretty, she stood in the Legère door with a bright little "good day," but her heart was throbbing disturbingly.

David arose from the dinner table with a slow smile, and pulled out a chair. "Come in, Graciette."

His mother rose also. Margaret Legère was tall and broad-bosomed. She was still straight and active, although her hair was long since grayed. "Ye're welcome, deary," she said in her gentle speech. After the death of Pierre she had reverted in her own household to the softly burred English of her own people, and it was in English that she spoke now. "We'll be havin' a dish of the new herrin'. They're fine and fat, and full o' roe. Sit ye by and have a bite." She turned busily to the stove. "My old mother always said: 'When

cookin' the potatoes, daughter, always put the stranger's name in the pot,' and that I always do."

Nervously, Graciette started to refuse. Then she became conscious again of the hard little rebellious thing within her. And David was smiling at her, gravely. "Eat with us, Graciette," he invited. Unlike his mother's soft pronunciation, David called it "Grahs-yet," crisply, as would his French father.

Graciette sat down.

All through the meal the heaviness within her grew. Life with Felix had forced Graciette to capabilities of a mature woman, but just now the feelings in her heart were pitifully childlike. David was going away. Her heart kept sinking. He had never been away from St. Anne's, from her, before. An empty, frightened forlornness filled her, which she strove miserably to overcome. With him beside her, so close she could touch him, the thing of wretched loneliness choked her. She wanted to die. And then this other thing—she pushed back her plate and rose.

Out in the yard with David, the girl suddenly made up toward the heights that formed one end of the cove on the Legère side. On a commanding headland looking out to sea stood a tall, black, weather-beaten cross, a *calvaire* which marked the grave of Pierre Legère. Graciette was moving swiftly up toward it without having spoken, and the young man followed.

Seated on a rock, the girl spoke. "Do you know how long you will be gone?" She was doing her best to appear calm.

He shook his head. "Until the run is over. It may be two weeks, it may be three."

She looked away. Three weeks of utter, dead loneliness! And now something fiercer still snatched at her heart. "But you are coming back? You're

not planning to ship for the run back down coast?" Down coast would mean the world, and then—

"No. I'm coming back to St. Anne's, Gracielle." The rapt, dreaming look that of late years had come to distinguish his youthful countenance, deepened. "I'm never going to leave St. Anne's until I see it the town that my father planned it to be."

The fierceness within the girl subsided. But she was still trembling. In the swollen flood of her stirred emotions Gracielle yearned toward him with every fiber of her being. Now, it was a physical thing. She wanted to touch him, to—to nestle close to— But such a thing was inconceivable, always had been inconceivable, and Gracielle's emotion subsided to the old hopelessness, the old helplessness, the old futility. All things of sentiment still lay dormant in the depths of David Legère's nature, still were anchored fast to the rock of his manhood. And Gracielle knew it.

She sat staring out to sea. And the worrisome thing that had been in her mind all night again invaded her. She began speaking, gravely. "This is what I came to tell you, David. It has given me no peace all day." She pointed across to the far side of the cove where, all by themselves, stood a gray mysterious pile of buildings which, in the passing of years, had come to form a lair for Saul Budro, the sea runner. "Budro, the Black One, came to our house last night to see my father. I have never seen him before on this side of the cove. I heard him speak your name." She stopped a moment, and when she began again it was on a tense low note, and she had slipped back into her native French. "He will never let your plans for St. Anne's come to pass."

A long moment, and a sullen red spark showed deep in the boy's eyes. "He cannot help it!"

The girl shook her head. Her face was drawn

with its look of prophecy. "I heard him make a terrible oath; and he is making strange plans. I am beginning to fear it is his life against thine!"

Suddenly the young man rose. He was moved with an impulse that sets itself heedlessly to win, by burning its bridges behind. "All right! I, too, shall make an oath!" he said gravely. He went and laid a hand on the upstanding cross of the *calvaire* erected in memory of his father. And he said: "By the memory of my father, and by all the saints, I consecrate my life to St. Anne's, and I swear that neither love nor hate, nor fortune, nor the world shall turn me aside." He crossed himself reverently. It was an aspiring oath—the vow of a very young man, of one mighty in faith but with no knowledge of the world. And the girl watched him radiantly, translated with her admiration—her worship.

Then Gracielle was on her feet. Recollection of Felix had suddenly seized her. "Au revoir!" she breathed hurriedly. "I shall see you before you sail." She turned and almost ran.

Stumbling up the moist slope of the Dorion yard a little later, she clasped her hands helplessly across her breast. The door of the old oven was open. Up from its mouth streamed a thin, blue film of smoke from the scorched, blackened loaves inside.

Gracielle slipped into the kitchen, her eyes quite strangely deep and black. Out from the inner room strode Felix Dorion. Felix was ominously collected and calm. He came out into the kitchen turning back his cuffs.

Gracielle crowded her body into a corner.

That night, among the crowd gathered on the shore to speed David Legère, Gracielle was not to be seen.

CHAPTER IV

EPIC OF THE HERRING

A VAST silence lay upon the sea at the Magdalenes, a gray, brooding silence, deep with mystery. It was as though the sea held itself quiet in a passive waiting—waiting for some definite epoch in its eternal functioning.

A hundred vessels dotted the surface—vessels of many burdens, of many ports. From Newfoundland they came; from Gaspe and Cape Breton; from Lunenberg and Halifax, from Sable, from Yarmouth, and many from far-off ports on the coast of New England; and well inside the motley flotilla lay the *Grampus*, with David Legère among its crew. The fleet had been gathering many days. As soon as the ice was gone they had come sailing in from many directions to be on hand when the sea in its mysterious spring run of herring among these islands should produce and bring forth.

And now for five days they had been waiting—patiently at first, but then with growing unrest. There *had* been years when the school of herring had arrived on the vast shallow bottoms before the ice was gone, and departed before the fishermen had arrived. And now the fear was already rife among the fleet that they had arrived too late, that the herring had come and gone. Every hour of the day were men in smaller boats seen moving about over the shallows, feeling deep down in the water with long poles for the gently vibrating thrill, the nubbling contact of tiny bodies that denotes the presence of a school.

Then early one morning David sought the captain. He stood smiling quietly, half abashed—it was ever difficult for him to express himself. “I can’t explain, m’sieu’,” he said in his accurate English, “but I have a *feel* that the herring are coming. I would like to take a boatmate and go to look.”

The captain regarded him rather discouragingly. “It’s no use. The fleet has poled every pint of water about the islands all morning.”

David still smiled courteously, quietly. “Just the same I would like to try, myself.”

The captain was looking at him curiously, as if he were seeing him for the first time. He was feeling the vague impress of a personality—intangible but powerful. The boy was striking-looking physically, of course, but there was something underlying the physical. This was no ordinary Canadian fisherman; he was a cross with something finer. The captain grunted. “All right. Go to it! Let’s see what *you* can do.”

He started to turn away. But Legère stopped him. “Thank you, m’sieu’. But supposing I place a school—before all the others?” David’s eyes held a compelling earnestness, eagerness. It was for St. Anne’s—always for St. Anne’s. He knew that his flair—as the captain would say, his “hunch”—about the herring was correct, and he wanted to be assured of his own stand in things.

“Look,” the captain was saying emphatically. “If you locate herring *now*—and enough to give us a load—I’ll pay you ten cents a barrel, in addition to your share.”

David computed rapidly. “And if there is more than your load”—the young man’s eyes were deep, intense—“will you take ten cents a barrel for the use of your twine, and let me dispose of the fish as I will?”

The captain laughed carelessly. “Yes. Sure.”

He gazed at the other oddly. "But I've run to the Magdalenes now for twenty years, and I tell you, my friend, the herring have been here already—and gone."

There was an odd conviction about David's reply. "I think you are mistaken, m'sieu'. The herring have not come."

David turned swiftly. He spoke a word to Jo Michelle. Then he sprang into the rigging and made upward for the crosstrees. Back in St. Anne's he had spent countless hours studying the habits of the smaller herring, the "sardine herring," from the headlands. In smooth weather he had learned with unerring accuracy to place the shoals by the patches of color off in the water. All day spotters from the fleet had been poling the depths along the shore north and south; now, slipping up and through the crosstrees, he directed his searching gaze east—east toward the open sea.

A single moment, and a thrill shot through him. From his lofty perch, the sea over the vast shallows in every direction showed yellowly green in pale translucence; and now, far out toward the open sea—

It was as though he looked upon secret workings. Far out a vast murkiness tinged through the shallow green of the sea, spreading through the depths like a far-reaching shadow. And it was a shadow that moved—its vague margins shifted constantly in flowing undulations, breaking out at certain points to sweep abroad through the sea's depths like a vast tingeing stain of murky sable. It was a pregnant shadow, a living shadow, and it was shifting slowly onward and inward toward the islands.

Legère slid down from the rigging with the smooth directness of a plummet. He sought the captain, and began speaking swiftly, with an unconscious authority. "I can find your load, m'sieu'. And you

have still an *extra* seine in the hold—will you let me take it on the same terms as we spoke?”

The captain frowned perplexedly. “You locate your herring first. Then we’ll talk.”

“I have already, m’sieu’.”

There was no mistaking the calm conviction in Legère’s face. The captain turned suddenly and summoned the mate. “Have them get the extra twine out of the hold,” he commanded.

“And captain”—David seemed to have lost his shyness—“may I have charge of the boats?”

The captain stared about at the listening crew. “Yes,” he roared bewilderingly. “Go the limit!”

Men sprang with alacrity to Legère’s command. The crew liked him, all save one—the man Sleeth, the man David had antagonized over a certain “game of the strong leg.” Now, with the captain well aft, Sleeth eyed David Legère with openly sneering hostility. David waited for him, bashfully confused. “Will you come, m’sieu’—please?” he requested, quietly. Sleeth moved sullenly forward and clambered down into the boat.

The seine boat was equipped with an engine, and they towed a dory loaded with the great nets. And now every eye on every vessel watched the progress of the little tow spluttering busily along on its crooked course out through the anchored fleet to the open.

Far out Legère slowed down. The sea lay smooth and inscrutable all about. To an unskilled eye there was not the slightest sign to denote the presence of underlying herring. But, a little to leeward, David’s eyes became glued to the surface. Almost imperceptibly tiny bubbles rose here and there—infinitesimal occurrences, the veriest of atoms on the surface of the sea. But his skilled eye knew them to be rising from swarming herring underneath. He shut off the engine and veered to leeward.

Swiftly, from his pocket, he took a little reel of thread, with a tiny lead plummet attached, and lowered it carefully down over the side. Slowly, into his face dawned a look of thrilled certainty. The thread on his outstretched fingers was communicating to his nerves of touch a constant nubbling vibration; the plummet was coming into constant contact with myriad passing bodies.

He gave swift, quiet orders to his impressed boat-mates. Jo Michelle and one other took the dory. The sea held the silence of death; men and boats moved like phantoms. The great web of the seine was payed out in a great circle, its dun-colored mesh dropping down into the sea like a deep, filmy wall. Slowly the ends were drawn together. Now, the great net encircled a section of the water slowly stirring to life, teeming life. It was necessary only to draw tight the purse line, running through rings around the bottom of the net, and all within would be imprisoned against any possibility of escape.

Legère, in the seine boat, managed the purse line himself. The other end was made fast to the dory, at the other end of the circle. Slowly, he dragged on the line, and then—he stopped dead. It was as though an icy deluge had suddenly drenched him. The rope was coming free! The purse line had parted! The herring could not be confined.

He seized an oar, paddled the seine boat swiftly up alongside the dory and stepped in. In the dory Jo Michelle regarded him in surprise. Jo's mate was the man Sleeth. With a swift movement David pulled up the dory's end of the purse rope. It came up readily. About twenty feet of it dangled clear. And the end showed it had been cut.

For one quietly speculative moment Legère gazed into the eyes of Sleeth, and then the seamen from the *Grampus* beheld a marvelous thing. Legère had kicked off his boots and ripped off his reefer and

vest. Then, bending low over the gunwale his body drove silently down into the icy sea outside the seine, the end of the purse line gripped in his hand. And now bubbles came up; and tiny swirls, following a slow course along the circumference of the seine.

Men gazed fascinated. Death was down there, in laboring lungs, in entangling twine. They stirred. They swore fervent whispered oaths. The feat was prodigious. The man below was reeving the parted length of the purse line back through the lower rings. Once he came up. His face emerged smoothly a still moment, the eyes closed, the nostrils quivering wide in an abnormally laboring flare. And so, a few dead seconds; then a swift powerful overset and an oily descent, the limbs working smoothly, instinctively, as though in their natural element.

Suspense grew. Men squirmed uneasily. Then, suddenly, a heavy shadow came shooting up from the gloomy depths. The man burst through the surface and made the dory. Jo Michelle grasped him and drew him in. He shook the water from his yellow mane like a great dog. His clothing clung blackly to his figure, outlining his trunk and limbs like sheerest black marble. Then he called out: "Haul in on that purse line!"

In dazed obedience the men obeyed. The purse line held fast. The seine became closed on its vast catch.

Now they were conscious of a great activity over the water. Their operations had been noted through a dozen glasses, and now the sea from the direction of the fleet was dotted with half a score of motor craft clattering over the water in thunderous echoes.

Another order came to David's men, tense—quiet. "Pay out that other seine! I'll stay here at the purse end myself!" With Jo's assistance David had

swiftly peeled off his sodden clothing and wrung it out. Now he thrust his legs into his boots and leaped into his coat. In another moment the great brown coils of the second seine were dropping over-board and settling downward into the water.

The sea now was a vast reverberating region of maneuvering motor boats. Like bickering black birds of prey they were swooping out toward the seiners from all directions, the thunder of their engines echoing across the sea with a wild clamor almost terrifying. Here and there seines were being run with frantic haste, and boats were chugging still farther out to try the depths there. But the school evidently had broken up. Perhaps by to-morrow it would be in nearer shore, perhaps, also, gone.

The two seines of the *Grampus* boats, however, held a gorging harvest. The *Grampus* would carry twelve hundred barrels. In the two seines were that amount and many more. The captain had arrived and the dipping began. And bidding for the surplus followed fast and furious, for it was getting to be so late in the season that the movements of the school were only a matter of guesswork.

And now the despoiling of the sea was going on all about. There was something epic, something almost tragic about it, something that stirred deeply. In a fury of greedy haste a hundred dip nets were stabbing down into the treasure hold of the submissive sea and the living hoard dragged forth. In countless millions, the tiny creatures, each a perfect life developed in delicacy and beauty in the sea, were dragged forth and dumped out, to be waded in. Men, foul with seals, and blood, and slime, panted and sweated and cursed regally in the throes of their labor, and strained and strove and cursed again, treading and stamping and wading until the dainty little shimmering creatures fluttering about in the

boats at their feet formed but a faintly twitching wallow of leaden muck.

It was evening when the *Grampus* was loaded, and the balance of the herring in the two seines loaded on other vessels; and David Legère knew that he had made money enough to assure the start of his own operations in St. Anne's.

Going back on board for the last time he sat in the stern thoughtfully. About him he was conscious of a blessed peace in the evening—the still tranquil passing of a day well spent. The sun was going down in a soft pink haze that spread a gentle radiance upon the face of the world, like a benign benediction. The men in the boats were relaxed to a weariness of deepest lethargy, their arms and legs flung wide in splay abandon, inert, motionless.

David Legère sat as though bathed in warm content. He was forcing himself to think of St. Anne's, to keep his mind off something else—a sinister recollection of the morning, having to do with the cut purse line and the man Sleeth. He made himself think of the changes his plans would make in the village: of how the village would look when the canneries should fill it with people; and the railroad should have—Here, his mind got away from him, rebelliously, and took up the other line of thought. It had almost done for him—tying that purse line together down there in the water by the seine; it had been a killing effort trying to pull hard when deep in the water, and consequently with no resistance; it had started the blood in his nose a little; and he could not see for the snapping things in his head that blinded him.

The boat bumped the side of the *Grampus* and men sprawled over. On deck was the smell of frying things, delicious on the peaceful air. The cook had stayed aboard from the first boat. So had

Sleeth, who was just passing Legère and the last arrivals.

Something smashed heavily on the deck!

Men leaped to startled attention. The reaction to vivid life was terrific. The thing on the deck was a man's body—Sleeth's. It lay still. But young Legère who drove it there was gathering his own great body. He sped through the air lightly. He landed on the thing softly like a panther, and he had the throat clutched in terrible hands, and was shaking it, and mauling its flesh. And he was whimpering and crying, sobbingly, like a very little, unstrung boy: "You cut it, the purse line! And—and St. Anne's could—could have—sunk for all—you'd—cared!" It was elemental ferocity uncovered. It was ghastly——

Jo Michelle sprang forward. He clung fast to the boy, deadly calm. He thrust his own face in front of the unseeing blue eyes that blazed palely. "You will kill him!" he protested. No response. Michelle shook him gently.

The convulsing throes ceased; the blazing eyes died down from their glare, grew wondering, almost frightened. David Legère dropped Sleeth's body and cringed away. He took Jo's hand and staggered to his feet. He made the sign of the cross heavily, as though in terror of himself, and reeled away to the forecastle.

The crew relaxed again, grinning their glee. They had been enraptured at it all. It is the way of the sea.

Morning, and the herring swarmed on all the shores. The sea inshore was milky white with their melt. Aft, the captain was counting out money to David Legère. All morning the boy had appeared white, abstracted. He was bewildered; he did not understand it—the terrific thing that had burst

forth within him the night before. He was afraid of himself; of what, some day, he might be led to do.

On the deck outside a happy Frenchman was singing fervently:

*"Filez, filez, O mon navire
Car le bonheur m'entend là-bas!"*

Across the cabin table the captain smoked in placid content. He pushed forward a pile of bank notes. "You've done well, boy," he said.

David emerged from his spell. His face now flushed happily at the meaning of it all. "It is wonderful, m'sieu', the herring!" he said. He nodded back toward the coast. "I am counting on the herring *making* our little country, back there."

The captain was gazing at the eagerness of youth showing in the boy's eyes. "They can do it," he said. "Herring have changed the destiny of more than one little country, my son."

CHAPTER V

THE GOLDEN HOPE

THE very day of his return, David started the building of his weir, and, after twenty years, St. Anne's again opened its eyes to the possibility of a meteoric career.

A half hour after David landed back in St. Anne's the story of his success was on every tongue, and redoubling in scope with every telling. Legère himself gave out little. He only smiled. So they sought Jo Michelle. And Jo? There were times when Jo was devoutly untruthful. It seemed to afford him some vague sort of spiritual adventure to see how far from truth he could stretch his teachings. And the outcome seemed to afford him an almost childish delight, like a boy who might cut up the scriptures to fly high on a kite. So all day Jo grinned in secret. He would find out deftly how much money his questioners thought Legère had made, and then in his reply he would double it. Of course by this process of happy mathematics by nightfall David Legère might have been moving about in a glinting aura of purest gold, with actual louis d'ors dropping off him.

Dougal McTavish heard with a big and solemn discontent in his heart. Dougal *would*. It was his nature. Tamant Boudreau was honest in his hearty congratulations. Danny Shane thumped David prodigiously on the back, with an apt and picturesque oath of delight. Narcisse Comeau fixed him with an earnest glance and said quietly: "*Mes félicitations, mon brave,*" and David flushed warmly and almost

wrecked the hand Narcisse intrusted to his own. He launched himself into his work that day filled with a happy glow.

In two weeks the weir, which was to play so vital a part in the history of the village was finished. Its construction had been attended throughout by the greatest interest. The first day, when Jo Michelle and himself had taken their dory at low water and staked out the site, it might have been a town holiday.

The site had been over on the sands at one end of Rocky Channel. Rocky Channel had grown to be as vital a part of David's plans as the herring themselves. It was a peculiar formation, a clean-cut narrow defile running between the bold shore and an outlying strip of rocks. Through this the tide flowed gently to pass out upon the sands beyond, and through this David had seen the young herring pass in dense shoals.

And that first day, too, had come Felix Dorion, suave, unctuous, polished, and his errand had been to buy just this site of Rocky Channel. The incident never ceased to puzzle David deeply. Felix, according to his own statement, had had the purchase of that shore section in mind some time—he had a client for it. And as he talked he emanated a pronounced "breath," which, together with his manner never failed to confuse David; and David finally bowed courteously but firmly and said in response to Felix's questioning: "There is no price on it, m'sieu'. I wouldn't sell it for a million dollars!" But always he had wondered: Who was Felix's client? What did he want of Rocky Channel?

And now the weir was complete. Its great circumstance of deep-driven poles, interlaced with brush, showed above the tide at low water in a high circular network wall with a straight wing like a high brush fence running shoreward, emerging on

the beach and running up shore above high-water mark. At high tide, when all was submerged, a school of young herring passing through Rocky Channel would encounter the brush fence across their course, would be turned aside and pass on down into the great circular trap beneath the tide.

The finishing touch was hanging the marline—the great net that was to line the walls inside—and late that last day, in the almost unbearable flood of his feelings, David Legère wanted to be alone, to go over it all in his mind again, to work out his dreams further still.

He struck up the beach to his own place, and up and out upon the high headland overlooking the sea. It was on this headland that he had spent so many hours watching and studying. He sat down on a rock and gave himself to the things within him. Below, the feathery tops of the tallest weir stakes showed just above the surface, wagging gently in the eddy. All was lifeless and empty down there now, but one day soon the spot would be teeming with life, would be—

Something distracted him. He turned swiftly.

Gracielle Dorion was coming toward him from out the dusk. Even at a distance her coming brought a little tinge of sadness. It always did, somehow.

She sat down beside him in silence, staring straight out into the dimming sea and sky, as though caught herself in some spell.

There was something so appealing in the turn of the little head, something so tender, so moving, in the heavy mass of childlike curls tied away from a too-white neck, in the slim, drooping shoulders, in the delicately rounded arms, that the sea and all within it was for a moment wiped from David's mind, and he did a strange thing—he put a hand awkwardly over hers and said: "I'm glad you have come, Gracielle. I—I needed some one."

It was not quite true. It may have been some unaccountable impulse of chivalry, a strong man's instinctive compassion and protectiveness; it may have been that his own happiness and success made him want to pass gladness on to some one else. David could not have defined it. At any rate, its effect was puzzling.

The little creature turned up to his a face so filled with passionate emotion that it startled him, confused him. And there was some tremendous feeling in her voice and behind her question, too. "*Me, David? Do you think you needed—me?*"

And after a dazed moment he obeyed the same impulse, and said: "Yes, I think *you*, Graciette. But what is it? What is the matter?"

She was fighting hard to stay miserable tears. "Oh, I wanted to help—some! Every one in the village has had something they could do to help you these past few days, while I, who would like to do so much, could do—nothing."

David was silent. Then he turned to her, smiling gravely. "Well, you know it's the spirit of things that counts. The wanting to help me pleases me as much as really *doing* something."

The girl turned her face back again to the darkening sea, and, as he glanced anxiously at her, David saw two glimmering wet streaks down her face, although it was held rigid, straight before her. His voice came deep, grave. "Graciette, don't! Don't do that!"

She began speaking, and her speech was free from emotion. "I can help you, David, some, although"—she seemed speaking to herself—"the good God only knows what I may pay for telling you!" A quiet moment, then: "Saul Budro, the Black One, has been at our house again. He came more than once while you were gone. I am helping you much when I tell you that the man is mad with wrath

that you should have built your weir, and I—I fear that my—my stepfather is listening to his plans, for——”

David laughed aloud at her fears. “Why should Saul Budro concern himself about the weir, Gracielle? And Felix Dorion—he is a notary and must have many who seek him out on business.” His eyes dropped anew to his weir, and his face lit with slow inspiration. He turned and touched her hand again, awkwardly. “Gracielle, you *can* help me.” He was smiling now. “The weir must have a name, like the weirs far down the coast. What shall we call it? You shall say!”

Slowly she responded to his mood. She looked down at the weir and a wan little smile struggled through. “Why not call it ‘Aladdin’s Lamp?’ It is going to bring so much.” In her starved little life Gracielle had managed to steal much from Felix’s books.

David laughed uncertainly. It was not just clear what she meant. “No. That is too grand, too fine. Besides, it must be a name all may understand.”

The girl considered. Then in sudden loyalty, “Why not ‘The Princess Mary’—you have told me of one down coast called ‘The Prince Albert?’ ”

David was considering, abstractedly. He was thinking of his loyal French father. “I would rather call it ‘Le Coq Gaulois!’ but that, too, is too fine.”

A quiet moment, then Gracielle turned an earnest face up to his. “You built it, David, hoping first of all that it would bring you wealth; so let’s call it ‘The Golden Hope.’ ”

He stared back at her in dawning appreciation. “‘The Golden Hope’ it is,” he said.

A swift silence fell, a silence in which each was lost in mazes of thought. Then David rose, took Gracielle’s arm gently to help her also, when—a

strange thing—the girl's face went dead white and she cringed away. "Oh, don't," she gasped throatily, as though in physical agony, and, struggling to her feet, she fell against his body, panting, spent.

The young man's face was puzzled and concerned. "What is it, Graciette?" he asked, quickly.

She opened her eyes and tottered erect. "Nothing, David. Just—just my arm and side—hurts."

"What's the matter with it?"

She turned away. "I—I fell. Let's go. I will be late."

They passed down from the headland, Graciette toward the village and David on down to look over his boat for the night. He was thinking of the smuggler across the cove and why the matter of the weir should concern him as Graciette had said. His shoulders squared suddenly. As a child he had always considered the man across the cove an actual consort of the devil himself. He felt much the same about him still, and now he stood a chance of having him for an enemy.

Down on the shore he came upon Jo Michelle, smoking abstractedly and staring across the harbor at Budro's retreat. As usual there was a sort of activity about the place. Lights like slow fireflies stung through the darkness, and the echoes of heavy boots stumbling about in open boats, and the sodden thump-thump of oar strokes.

David spoke. "What do you suppose goes on all the time in that rendezvous, Jo? I'd like once to get a look within." He was surprised at the somber look of sinister feeling that came on the other's face. And he remembered now that he had seen it before.

The answer was an ominous growl. "That day may come, mon ami, and the good God grant I be with you!"

"Jo," asked the boy suddenly, "has the man ever injured you? Have you anything against him?"

Michelle knocked the ashes from his pipe. "Only the fact of his having been born, M'sieu' David!"

They moved homeward. The boy's thought wandered from Jo to Saul Budro, and from Budro to Graciette, and what it was that could have hurt her. Then Jo's remark on leaving him at the road dispelled all else. Jo said: "Herring began breaking water this evening, M'sieu' David. To-morrow they'll be inshore."

CHAPTER VI

THE GOLDEN HOPE FISHES

IT struck the village like a meteor when the great weir "fished" for the first time the next day, even though its ultimate success had been anticipated by every man in the village.

Lying tranced up on the headland, David Legère had seen at last the vanguard of a vast school of tiny flickering fish pass through Rocky Channel and on into the great trap beyond. He sprang to his feet and his course down through the village was like that of a comet; and like a comet did he lead a broadening trail of followers.

It was a noisy, excited crew that swarmed about the outside circumference of the weir at low water when the catch was to be dipped. Within, Legère and Jo Michelle, with one other dory, were functioning steadily in tense silence.

Without, a hoarse gabble of computation began to rage excitedly. It was a day of all days. Time, place, were forgot. No man had thought beyond what he saw, although even then the bright sky of St. Anne's future was growing a cloud. With every silvery netful uproar increased:

"Five hundred barrels!"

"A thousand I tell you!"

"*Mondit!* What to do with them!"

"Gowdy, Doan & Robertson's man is to ship 'em in salt—make Rooshian sardines of 'em!"

"At a dollar a barrel, too!"

"They say if the run keeps up——"

Dead silence.

The racket ceased as though stifled under a blanket. From out the gray, mysterious buildings across the harbor a swift, silent motor boat had drawn and was sweeping swiftly up to the weir. In the stern sat a man who, even from a distance, chilled from very brutishness. After more than twenty years Saul Budro, gross, black, hairy, had come out of his seclusion to take a hand again in the fortunes of the village.

Inside the weir David's tall young figure towered a moment, rigid as a statue. Jo Michelle kept on, but his face had fallen somber, almost ugly in its sudden transformation.

The newcomer stood on the beach and waited. Standing apart, there was something incongruously magnificent about him, a negative impress—compelling, powerful. Saul Budro impressed one with awe as being a man who jeered at the world, who gibed at the devil, and who had never considered a God.

The great weir drained of its harvest, the crowd of men stepped ashore, passing the heavy, bunched figure of Budro with mere nods. Then came the young weirman.

Budro raised an imperative hand. "Come here!"

There was a moment's hesitation, and Legère obeyed.

"I'm biddin' for that weir site," Saul said, bluntly.

Into the boy's head had come what Gracielle Dorion had told him of Saul Budro a few days ago.

Budro was talking on, making frank mention of his illegal business with the sheer disregard of utter fearlessness. "We outgrew our present quarters some time ago. That channel through the rocks might have been built for just what we want. I've been wantin' it some time, waiting for this crazy weir idea to play out to talk buyin'." Then, as might a man who spat out his one and only figure

at a breath. "I'll give you five thousand dollars for it." He subsided, the great scar across his face beginning to show redly.

The two stood looking at each other a tense moment. Then: "It isn't for sale." The young man turned away.

Saul Budro caught his arm, and whirled him about. "Listen," he began in tense fury. "You needn't be hangin' onto it on account of yer blasted meddlin' father's idea of gettin' a railroad down on this coast! We don't want no railroads runnin' down to St. Anne's, understand? Weir or no weir—canneries or no canneries! And there won't be ever! Meanwhile, I want that shore privilege, and am willin' to pay for it!"

The boy stood stock-still. He seemed very fair and white, very young and—clean, beside the other, and now there was a something hard growing in his eyes.

"And I'm telling you this," he returned. "There'll never be so much as a smuggled can of opium pass through that channel, m'sieu', while God lets me live!"

Budro drew back a sudden fist. His scar-slash'd face was livid. His boatmate caught him and dragged him to one side in earnest remonstrance. And the boy strode up the beach.

A moment later, in the little Legère kitchen, David was saying to Margaret Legère: "The sea has been good to us this day, mother! M'sieu' Wiggin, the Gowdy, Doan & Robertson buyer, has bought the whole run to ship in salt." He held her off, his happiness beaming shyly in his eyes. "To-day alone pays all the costs, and"—he laughed—"a silk dress for you, and a rocking-chair that swings. And a new stole for Father André—a black one for funerals, and a white one for weddings!"

A shade came over Margaret Legère's happy face

as she turned away. "Ah, me, Davy Legère. I'm expectin' now it'll be yer own weddin' afore long!"

David Legère flushed. "Not till I find some one to take your place, mother," he laughed. "And they're not livin' in St. Anne's!"

"Ah, well! There'll be many comin' to St. Anne's now. The sea brings ye riches, Davy, lad. Perhaps it can bring ye sweethearts, too!"

There was a knock. Saul Budro's boatmate stood smiling blandly around the threshold. "I just wanted to say that Mr. Budro, here, has a fine new proposition to make about the weir site he's wantin'. He says as how he'll——"

But—surprisingly—his big principal just then stepped swiftly around the corner of the house and pulled him aside. He looked sharply to the young man in the doorway. "I said I *did* want it. But I've changed my mind." Now he was leering oddly, his eyes glinting exultantly under their bushy brows. He seized the other briskly by the arm. "Come on!"

Down the yard he turned on his astonished henchman. There was the sinister uplift of a thousand devils in his face. "Proposition, hell!" he scoffed derisively. "There's no use trying to buy a man's dreams, man, with money. I've known that from the first. But," he grinned evilly, "there's another way. Did ye hear what they was talkin'—what she said about a sweetheart? It come to me then. There's just one thing in the world that'll make this lad fall, and fall hard, but he don't know it. And that"—some great, unholy joy was filling the man—"and that's a *woman!*" A little down the beach, and he added: "You know 'The Eel Pot,' up on the Quebec river front?"

The man grinned back. "Every sailor on the coast knows it."

"Madame Margot Ducharme that runs it is my

sister." Saul laughed. "I'm goin' to Quebec this week, and this is what I'm goin' to do. It's the oldest game there is, but it never fails——" He rolled along with his mouth turned to the other's ear.

Behind, in the little kitchen, the boy was saying: "He wants 'The Hope' because he could load and unload his stuff, hidden out of sight in its channel. Besides, I know now that he's afraid if it is a success and the railroad comes, that it will open up St. Anne's and put him out of business."

"Well, don't let anything happen to ye, lad." The woman sighed and shook her head, sadly. "I been thinkin' of your father lately. Ah, Davy, the sea can bring many things—it can bring ye happiness, lad, but it can also bring ye woe."

A flat, harsh outcry racketed up the rocks. Somewhere down the beach a man was laughing crazily.

CHAPTER VII

THE EEL POT OF MARGOT

QUEBEC is a city of many levels. And the relative planes of its Fields of Abraham, its city proper, its lower town, and its river front, are possibly paralleled by its human levels. And perhaps at the very bottom of these last might have stood *Le Piège des Anguilles*—“The Eel Pot” of Margot Ducharme.

It seems to be true that toilers of the great waterways, after following the enforcedly clean and decent life of the sea, should, in eternal compensation, demand an abysmal revelry ashore to strike a balance. Every seaport town has its adventuresome places of entertainment for its men of the sea, and on the Quebec river front the establishment of Margot Ducharme was without a peer in its grim efficiency.

To the French mind it stood frankly simple as “The Trap;” the English habitués made of it “The Eel Pot;” and a novice of either class, partaking of its entertainment for the first time, found himself strong in the conviction that it was amazingly well named. But the place did a thriving business. One got his money’s worth at *Le Piège*—and one always came back.

On a forenoon in May, in the little counting room in back, the proprietress sat at an old desk under a greasy lamp, figuring accounts. Margot Ducharme, at forty-five, was an emotional automaton—a creature to whom the matter of life was a stale, drab mess like the stew in yesterday’s pot.

Somewhere about her, however, was something of unconquerable determination, perhaps having to do with the matter of gain, for when it came to money her soul seemed to respond eagerly and vigorously. All other matters pertaining to life might have lain neglected—in the pot. She was a heavy woman, with sleek black hair and shrewd black eyes.

The door from the outer room was kicked open and a man entered. It was early in the day for any but local business, and the woman looked up in surprise. Then her face retired behind its inscrutable apathy, and she set down a few figures before looking up again.

Saul Budro scratched a match on the desk. "Where's Justine?" There was no sort of greeting between the two.

"What do you want of her?"

"I've got a job for her."

The woman looked up somnolently, a tiny flare of ironic malice in her face. "Why Justine? Has Shanghai run dry of Chinamen? Or was the poppy crop a failure?"

"Shut up!" Saul snarled. "Where is she?"

Madame sorted her papers discriminatingly. "She's just home from school this week." She paused for a moment to regard an unsatisfying total on her sheet, and went on. "And she's got *ideas*. Four years with the sisters has changed her. She probably will not want your job."

"Yes, she will. There's a good dollar in it—it'll help pay for the convent."

The woman was still, immovable. But she was suddenly alive inside. "What is it?" she asked guardedly.

Saul lit his pipe and sat down on the desk.

From out in the outer room came sounds of resuming activity. Outside, seated on a bench in a corner, a jovial river driver was exaltedly jerking

away at a concertina, and two others, facing each other in clumsy, bearlike intentness, were soberly executing grotesque, drink-conceived dance steps. At some of the tables two or three young women smoked cigarettes, and a half dozen men lounged heavily among the dishes or made uncertain passes at belated breakfasts.

The outer door opened from the street and a man entered. He was slim and sleek and well past youth; he was dressed in noticeably store clothes, and he went and sat down in the corner with a clumsily assumed air. He laid aside the new derby hat. It revealed hair plastered close and gleaming seallike; and it permitted attention to focus on the craftily sharp eyes set oddly close to the long nose.

The man summoned a waiter. "Say to Mademoiselle Justine that I, Cesaire Lacasse, await her." There was a pompous note in it that bordered on authority, and the other clients looked up.

A moment, and a door down the room opened. A young girl entered with upflung head, and all other interest dribbled out.

Justine Ducharme was a creation of fineness, of distinction—of amazing perfection. She was distinctive rather than tall, with a marvel of blue-black hair rippling straight back from a white face; her eyes were also black, and intense; and a small red mouth cut in upon the whiteness of her face with striking authority.

Her manner was a trifle overimperious—the self-reliance of her earlier years evidently gone wrong. In the old days, before the convent, her young wits had been sharper than a serpent's tooth. Since then—well, the sisters had come to accord Justine Ducharme great love and greater apprehension.

At Lacasse's gesture she seated herself, and sat listening to his somewhat proprietary talk with a still face set straight ahead. She was learning

strange things in the last year, was Justine Du-charme—strange things about life that all the shrewdness developed of her life previously could hardly take in.

She had come to know of the realm of personal achievement; it had intrigued her. She had peered ahead at the matter of the world; it stirred tremendously things in her—had fired her with interest, with ambition. The thing of honor she came to know of; it confused her with its bewildering application—she laid it aside. And love she had looked upon—and passed up, also.

And now she was through school, and intensely eager for the world and for real achievement, and she found herself bound hand and foot—found herself with a debt to pay, a debt not of her own contracting, but which she had, nevertheless, stood for in a spirit of reckless gamble.

The man beside her was gloating over her as a miser might gloat over his hoard. "My money has been well spent on you, *ma chère*. You do us all credit."

She spoke without turning around. "If I had known it was your money at the first, Cesaire, I should not have gone. I'm sorry now that I finished school at the price. I shall pay you back."

He grinned and took her hand. "Of course, when we marry. Thy mother and I—we have found a little house——"

"I may change my mind, Cesaire." She drew away her hand.

He seized it again sullenly. "A bargain is a bargain—you so said yourself."

The girl was analyzing the motives of her past with ferocious accuracy. "It was my mother who said that. I was crazy to go back and finish school. I would probably have promised anything. You

knew that. So did I." She leaned over and played with a glass on the table.

"There are many who would indeed be glad of thy chancee, *ma chère*." Some of this was conceit, some actual fact. "Many who would give little fingers for thy place, and"—the rest came stark and chill and stripped bare of sentiment—"and no one fools Cesaire Lacasse."

The grave menace in things stung her to madness—his ill-advised threat was a challenge to the old-time self-reliance. She turned and swept a cool glance over him appraisingly.

"Dost think thou'rt such a prize then"—sudden fury blazed in her eyes—"with thy weasel's eyes and thy nose of a wolf!"

She snatched herself free and moved away. The turmoil within her now was terrific. One did not hurt so with their tongue; the sisters had shown her this, in loving patience. And she had learned it because they wished her to. And her hard-won self-control had become so dear to her as a chaplet of victory. And now it had failed her completely. She was hating life; she was hating herself.

A woman at a table leered up as she passed, and spoke derisively in a low tone to her table mate. "Madonna locks on a face *du diable*?" she laughed.

It was salt on the raw. Justine leaped. She held the terrified creature with one strong young arm, and with the other wrought ludierous havoc with her elaborate coiffure.

"My Madonna locks at least grow upon my skull," she gasped, the old-time defiance stalking free. "While thine——" She dragged curls, puffs, and pads from the disheveled mass of the other's head and flung her back.

In the crowd about her she held aloft the mass of stuffing, curls, pins. "Voilà!" she cried and

flung them. "Take them, and perchance stuff thy mattress!"

In the inner door stood Margot Ducharme and her brother. Madame's face was alight with somber pride. Saul grinned broadly in fullest appreciation. "The child surely does credit to her convent training," he observed to the woman beside him.

A moment later, in the dingy little counting room, Justine had flung herself in a chair and sat staring straight ahead of her. A still, blank moment, and she shuddered slightly.

Then her eyes closed slowly, as though the things she was seeing were ill to look upon. At her side, Cesaire Lacasse was grinning proudly and soothing her unnecessarily.

Suddenly she opened her eyes and thrust him aside. "What it is you want of me?" she demanded of Saul Budro by the desk.

Saul came and sat on the table. "I've got a job for you," he began. Saul had figured his great scheme out long since. It was a crude scheme—such as might be framed up by a man like Saul Budro to be staged in a country like the North Coast. It had for its plan the old, old theme of Delilah, and it would probably succeed from its tragic clumsiness.

"It's a woman's job—a *young* woman's job," Saul went on. "It's a job for a woman that's got some spirit—and perhaps she'll stand in need of courage, too, before she's through." He stopped a moment, then: "I want to get hold of a most important shore site, by way of a man—"

The girl made an impatient little sound of disparagement. Her eyes left his face in cold disinterest.

"Now, wait," the man counseled. "This is a more important proposition than you think. It's a big thing—a damned big thing! It runs into big issues—maybe into history." Saul grinned. "But it won't

be the first time history has been messed up by a woman."

He began speaking soberly in earnest now, and he was revealing clearly the depth of his concern—one might almost think, of his fear. He sketched briefly St. Anne's location on what might, one day, be made a valuable vantage point on the coast. And he mentioned his own interest in it. Then he went on with his plan, his plan that was conceived with outrageous details, albeit uncanny in their crude wisdom and reasoning.

Gradually he came to hold again the threads of the girl's interest. "The man's a young man—a boob yet—but he's got stuff in him, more stuff in him than any man on the North—"

"Never mind the man!" the girl interrupted sharply. Her face had lit as with big inspiration—she touched his arm eagerly. "But does it mean much money?"

"If you win, yes. I'll pay well!"

"How well?"

He smashed a fist down on the table and named a sum.

She was all alive now—hopefully, intensely alive. "It will make me free," she said rapturously to herself.

"*Mais, non!*" Cesaire Lacasse brushed Saul Budro aside. "I will not have it! I will not listen to it!"

"*You, Cesaire!*" the girl said with chilling calm. "*You* will not have it! Listen, Cesaire." She slipped into French. "I did not know of thy pact with my mother four years ago, when I went to Le Cœur Sacré. Perchance if I *had* known I would have consented—who knows? But I did not.

"After two years I learned of it, but where is the girl of seventeen who would not have risked much"—she swept a swift hand about her—"to get away

from—this? It was no worse for me to accept such a pact than it was for you to make it. But now it is different. I will not marry you, Cesaire—you would not be happy, nor would I. That is final. But I *will* pay you back."

"That is not what I want. I—I will not permit this!"

Budro interrupted complacently. "You interfere in this, my smooth friend, and you'll be making marriage with death," he observed carelessly. He kept on engrossedly pecking at a hole in the wood with his great unclasped pocketknife.

Lacasse was like a lynx with his foot in a trap. He was glaring in deadly quiet. "Then I go with you, to see——"

"But you *can't*——" the girl began.

Budro raised a hand. "Let him come. I'd rather have him where I can put hands on him than loose. Besides, we need a man who is a stranger to St. Anne's."

Saul stood up. "But if he opens his face it will release you from all obligation to him, and then—he'll have me to reckon with."

"Listen, Cesaire!" The girl's face now was odd in its intensity. "If I fail and so *cannot* pay you, then will I marry you!" The three watched her immovably. There was an electric thrill in things. "It is a bargain," she concluded. "I, Justine Ducharme, say it of myself!"

The older woman yawned and picked up her papers.

CHAPTER VIII

OUT OF THE FOG

THERE came a night, early in June, that, long after, was known to have taken the history of St. Anne's and done strange things to it—a night that left scars on it.

With the success of the great weir, life in the village had become a matter of vigorous, expectant enthusiasm. Every one, from Micmac Jean to David Legère himself, was counting strangely on the dazzling future now made certain.

For a fortnight the *Golden Hope* had fished heavily as on that first day. And swift boats of generous burden, from great concerns far down the coast, were present daily to buy the catch. Already the little hamlet, tucked away in the notch in the coast, was attracting attention.

And already Father André had been writing the railroad, and every fisherman in St. Anne's now talked of nothing else. And every day, while waiting on the slack tide, or at evening along the shore, the men congregated eagerly and reconstructed St. Anne's ambitiously.

Then, the night—

It began uneventfully enough. Jo Michelle was down along the beach alone. Jo was trying, as happened very often, to adjust his inclinations to his faith.

Unlike Legère, Jo's faith was a matter of considerable elasticity. God, according to Jo, was a most estimable personage who understood a great deal and could make things quite all right, always.

It happened to be an evening when Jo coveted the thing of a brand-new compass. It lay in the bow of a motor boat of one of Budro's men, drawn up on the beach.

Jo fondled it with hands and eyes, and peered around stealthily. He started to put it under his coat, then dropped it suddenly, crossed himself piously against temptation, and hurried away from it.

It was in that moment that he sensed unusual activity over on the Budro shore. Something special seemed going on. As he watched, Jo's face settled into the hard, sullen lines Budro's place always evoked.

Presently he glanced seaward. Far out the first fog of the summer lay rolled up upon the sea like a great gray scroll. As the sun had dipped down, a gentle easterly was bearing it majestically on to unroll upon the coast. The Budro activities, then, could not mean a departure.

Jo went back and sat down on the bow of the motor boat. A moment, and David Legère came toward him out of the dusk, on his way home from the village. He nodded across the cove.

"What goes on, Jo?" he asked.

"I know not, m'sieu'. Budro is back from Quebec. Since dusk it has been like that." Jo folded his arms conclusively. "The devil probably braces his feet for business."

Legère was sizing up the sea. "If it's thick in the morning, Jo, we won't be seining the weir!" He started homeward.

Behind him the fog came stealing thinly into the harbor like a ghostly presence on the cold air. Jo Michelle cast a sharp look through the fast-thickening haze toward the retreat across the cove.

Then he picked up the bright little compass and tucked it under his coat. "When the good God

sends fog, one must be prepared," he muttered, and started away.

Over in the Legère cottage, a little later, David Legère was sitting down to a belated supper. His mother turned to the little mantelpiece, took down a letter, and passed it to him. "Father André left it to-day," she remarked.

He opened it and read it slowly:

DEAR SIR: It is true that we have been considering a possible site for a terminal spur to open up the coast in your section. While otherwise St. Anne offers pecuniary advantages, our reports show that the shore bottom in your harbor is of such a nature in spots that we wish to be assured, if possible, of a site that will successfully withstand the storm of your coast without too extensive construction.

There is no doubt but your section is possible of extensive development, and when we can go into the matter in more detail—

The boy rose to his feet, his face gleaming. "The railroad! These men are coming our way, at last! And St. Anne's is coming into her own—nothing on earth can stop us now!"

Even as he spoke, it happened.

A sudden, living glow, like a burst of light, dawned in through the shoreward window, lit up the opposite wall, and died away, leaving them staring, awestruck. Then the door slammed open and Jo Michelle stood on the threshold. "Some one's aground on Thread o' Life ledges! They're sending up lights!"

Legère snatched his cap and went outside into the cold darkness. Again the light came—a great pale radiance blooming wide in the heart of things and falling away, leaving impenetrable blackness.

David turned. "We'll get out and see what's doing, Jo!" They hurried down the beach and boarded a boat.

It was a strange voyage. Legère's heart was beating a little hurriedly with the nervous excitement of youth. They were forging straight as an arrow direct into the heart of impenetrable mystery. They shut down the engine and listened.

There came but the long, deliberate wash of the swell on the ledges—a hoarse, solemn note in the black void. But, somehow, now, the boy was feeling that strange things awaited him off there in the blackness. Every sense was alive to it; the night was filled with it.

Again they stopped. A long hail came. They answered, and changed their course a bit to the north.

And then—God! The boy's heart leaped. His scalp tightened. There had come a different cry—long-drawn, clear, thrilling with the penetration of high-pitched sweetness—a cry that could only come from the soft throat of a woman.

The youth was dumb. But his companion hallooed. Swift on the end of it came reply—out of the blackness just over the bow. The boat nosed the rocks, and the boy leaped out.

Over the rockweed Legère ran, stumbling heavily in the blackness. The lantern of Michelle, coming behind him, cast a gigantic leaping shadow of his figure athwart the black wall of fog ahead—a vast, black, jerking specter. There came a little whimper of fear from the rocks right at his feet, and the boy dropped.

Somewhere near, in the gloom, a man's voice was speaking in French to Michelle. It was stammering a crazy tale of an outside ship that had split in the fog off the Newfoundland coast; of losing the other boats; of some days' rowing, chartless, toward a coast that never appeared; of— The boy heard

never a word. He was staring down into a pair of wide eyes, vaguely luminous in the lantern light.

Then the strange man's voice again: "Who is thy boatmate?"

And Michelle's answer: "M'sieu' David Legère, of St. Anne's."

Something had suddenly intensified the light in the great eyes staring up at Legère from out the dark. The woman rose—a slight figure. She held out rather pitiful arms to the big, vague figure, and said in appealing trustfulness: "I am very tired; will you help me, please?" He picked her up like a child.

Striding to the boat with the slight figure on his breast, the boy was quite numb in his tension; his neck muscles drew oddly stiff; the flesh of his chest pulled taut, tremendously nerved in every fiber; his arms quivered throughout, in their powerful young strength.

Back ashore in the cove, the girl raised arms to him again, like a little child. His throat clutched and swallowed strangely as he picked her up and stepped over in the water. Her face nestled in his neck—warm, alive. His head grew giddy with the furious rushing of his blood.

The wide, wondering eyes of the crowd about him pulled him to, as though he were being dragged out from the swirl of a maelstrom. He blinked dazedly. He set the girl down.

For approaching drama in St. Anne's the stage was set.

BOOK THREE

THE SONG OF AWAKENED MANHOOD



CHAPTER I

THE CASTAWAY

THE next morning St. Anne's was awake early, alive with interest. The events of the previous night, already discussed all over with widely varying detail, promised to make the day a red-letter day in the village.

The girl had been taken to the house of the Widow Saulnier, and from there came early bulletins for the gossips of the village. Her name was Leone—Justine Leone. Never had one of such beauty been seen in St. Anne's—or, if you please, on the whole North Shore.

And her manner—the grace, *le haut ton*, of a queen on her throne! Was it not to be expected? Did she not come from London—London, the greatest city in the world? Well, then!

Later that statement was qualified—and by the very best authorities. It was in London that she had been living *only*; it was London where she had embarked on the ill-fated ship; she was bound for the States to live with her kindred. But her *birthplace*! Ah! That explained the manner, explained all—her birthplace was *Paris*. It was to be expected!

The man with her? Poof! Common clay, of a surety! He was but a passenger. He looked like a ferret with his narrow eyes; and one could tell from his speech that he was but a provincial.

And so all along the shore. It was wafted early up to Gracielle Dorion on the somewhat rheumatic wings of old Barbe from the curé's. There was something about it all that haunted her, something in the mention of this strange girl that seemed to prick her with a vague sense of alarm.

And, in the Legère cottage, Margaret Legère heard with no comment, save the half-involuntary little exclamation of pity for the castaway. Early that morning she had sensed something odd in her son—something unusual; he seemed far away, his mind working dazedly in some unfamiliar realm. And Margaret Legère, like Gracielle, knew a vague uneasiness within her; something that had to do with her love for her son.

David Legère marched along the beach that morning as if he were seeing it all for the first time. And then, almost along by the village, he saw the girl coming.

His heart bounded sharply. His first impulse was to escape. Then, suddenly, he was staring immovably, escape forgot before the wonder stealing over him.

Even in her borrowed clothing, the girl was startlingly arresting. He had never seen a face of such ivory pallor, such a gleaming red mouth, or hair so black. And her eyes! She was smiling at him, was advancing in a friendly little manner, her hand outstretched. The boy took it, and thrilled—all through him.

"I wanted to thank you, *mon ami*," she was saying. "A man who saves a life is second only to the good God who gave it!"

She spoke in French, a clear, skillful French that rejoiced the ears.

And when David could he replied, clearing up, as it were, the loose carelessness of his own North Shore speech.

"Any man would have done the same, mamselle. There was nothing of God in what I did."

The girl was now looking at him curiously. Already she sensed big things dormant in this splendid youth, things probably unguessed by the man himself. To stir them up might prove a blessing to him, after all. "Who knows?" she said suddenly and laughed.

Her laugh brought them down to ordinary levels, and the boy smiled back confusedly.

Then: "I have heard of you, Monsieur Legère," she said. "All morning have these good people told me of this town of St. Anne's and of your work. It seems all their thought is of Monsieur David Legère!"

The boy's face had reddened. His old helplessness when he wished to express himself was upon him. He got as far as, "I—I am afraid—"

The girl's eyes sparkled with spirit. His blush was delightful. She had come out with a great impatience, as of getting through with an unpalatable task; but somehow her swift woman's interest in this man had swept it well into the back of her mind.

Now her tone became guardedly casual—almost businesslike. "Tell me, *mon ami*—how may I get out from St. Anne's? From what I learn I may be here some time."

Now that things were impersonal, David Legère was on safer ground. "Our women travel but little, mamselle. And the coast vessels take our men up and down shore, whenever they wish to go farther than their own boats will take them."

His face was quietly sincere, although a strange tumult was keeping up within him. "If mamselle wishes, perhaps I could arrange it."

But she hastened to dissuade him. "Oh, no," she said. "It is indeed kind, but, you see—I—I must first write to my kinspeople in the States. You—

you see I—I am left with but little money, and must wait here until I hear from them."

He started to speak. In simple manliness he was going to offer help. But she stopped him, rather startled at the turn of things.

"Au revoir, monsieur. I shall see you again. It is interesting, this St. Anne's and your part in it." She looked up at him with winning camaraderie. "Who knows—perchance I can help you with it all, while I am here."

She took a few steps, then turned and watched him striding away down the beach.

"What a great oaf it is!" she said to herself. "But how magnificent, withal!" She faced about and took in the village with a shudder of distaste. "Ah, I hope it may be soon that I get away from *this* place."

Behind her, David Legère marched along rather uncertainly. His mind was behaving strangely—for the first time he was unable to keep it on the affairs that had so long held it.

All he could see was this girl—and the strange phases of her predicament. And it was not his mind, entirely, that was affected by it all, but some strange part of it had to do with his body.

He flushed hotly, it seemed, all over, when he recalled how warm, how soft, her face had been in his neck last night. And this new thing that had taken up life of some sort within him! It was a feeling as if some great door of life had been opened unto him; as though something shrill and sweet within him had been touched to vibration at its unfolding.

He heard a hail and looked up. "A hundred barrels, M'sieu' David!" It was Jo Michelle. The weir was filled again.

David jumped into a dory. His mind exulted. What wonderful things came to one from the sea!

CHAPTER II

GRACIETTE LEARNS ALL

IT was a strange move on the part of chance that even this early in the game the crude plot against Legère should draw an outsider into its secret inner circle, and that that outsider should be the gentlest soul in the village—Graciette Dorion.

For a week things had been moving with ever-increasing momentum in St. Anne's. The great weir continued to fish richly, and the all-absorbing interest in the weir and the impending future of the village speedily flowed over the dramatic incident of the castaways.

Already, every man on the shore sensed the new note of increased prosperity. And not the last among the villagers so happily affected was Felix Dorion.

For some unaccountable reason Felix Dorion began to carry himself jauntily, apparently well pleased with things. Even in her own secret unrest, Graciette wondered at Felix. The fact was that Felix was playing a game—a profitable game, but one that held its elements of danger also.

Saul was paying him well for his services, and Saul had extensive plans. But the fact that Felix had been unable to purchase Rocky Channel for Saul did not prevent his purchasing other holdings of the fishermen for himself, which, before the boom should burst, he hoped to dispose of for very tidy pickings indeed.

Occasionally, however, Felix's advances among the men of the village met with no uncertain rebuff. This always aroused a contemptuous, sullen

devil in him, and it was after such an encounter, one evening, that he strode out into his little kitchen wearing a face black and brooding.

He set a bottle of whisky by his plate at the supper table, and dropped into his place. Graciette noted it and busied herself at the stove nervously. She knew from experience that the meal was going to be difficult. She dished up the food, and set down hurriedly the hot frying pan that had burned her fingers badly.

“Dépêche-toi!” came from Felix in a sullen, impatient bark.

She picked up the plates. They, too, were hot—to burn. She tried to get them safely to the table. It was disastrous. The plates slid irrecoverably. The bottle of whisky fell to the floor and broke.

The girl cowered back, turned, and made into a corner by the stove, her face white in its terror. At the table Felix Dorion seized a cup and drove it. It smashed on the wall by the girl's head, and Felix was getting up when—

The shed door opened. Saul Budro stood leering in curiously. Suddenly his eyes fell on the broken bottle by the table, and the situation dawned on him. Grinning broadly, he pulled a similar bottle from his pocket and set it down.

“Don't take it so to heart, man,” he said to the staring Felix. He glanced over the table. “Cod tongues and sounds!” he exclaimed appreciatively. “I'll trade this fresh bottle for a bite of supper. I must talk to you.”

Felix recovered himself and sat down, smiling thinly but unctuously, and eager with proffered hospitality.

Graciette hastened to serve them. Her hands trembled at times so that the cups and saucers clattered. She had never been close to the great outlaw before.

The two drank quite freely with the meal. Felix Dorion was one of the men of more mental than physical make-up, who could drink almost interminably, and by some strange alchemy of spirit keep his mind clear and subservient. Budro's great bulk absorbed liquor like a sponge. But his mind absorbed it, too. First it stimulated all his mental processes; then a great mellowness invaded him—filled him with heavy, oxlike content.

It was well along in the meal that he looked at Graciette, as if seeing her for the first time. He was eating prodigiously, and his face was crimson and greasy in the lamplight. "You've got a good cook, Dorion," he said, watching the girl by the stove.

"And a good daughter, m'sieu'," rejoined Felix oilily.

Saul blinked placidly. He was amicably disposed of late. Things were moving well with him.

"Women has their places, after all," he grinned. "I never knowed how useful they could be until"—he winked in clumsy humor—"until this one got washed ashore here the other night."

Felix jerked his head warningly toward Graciette. Graciette stood still, her fork poised. Unlike the rest of the village, the new arrival at St. Anne's had occupied *her* mind constantly. The girl's beauty, her manner, her obvious interest in David Legère, had been in Graciette's thoughts through many a long hour of loneliness.

"Our young promoter here in St. Anne's seems to be promotin' somethin' else since this girl came." In his mellow glow it was Saul's mood to be jovially dealing in byplay.

But Felix Dorion's cold control knew no such nonsense. He rose suddenly. "Let us go into the other room, m'sieu'." Saul followed, taking the bottle with him.

Gracielle cleared the table and washed the dishes. Her mind seemed struggling in a heavy perplexity. What could be beneath the big smuggler's remark, Gracielle wondered.

And then, clear and distinct, came Saul Budro's heavy voice, telling all. The words seemed stalking out from the inner room to mouth and jeer at the girl: "In a few days, now, this girl'll be leadin' Legère like a lamb to the slaughter. I know her. She'll do as she says—she's forced to. So you want to be gittin' your papers framed up. She's crazy to git away."

As in a horrible nightmare Gracielle heard the man go on—both were so engrossed now as to have forgotten all caution. She stood half paralyzed by the kitchen table, the manner of Budro's treachery uncoiling before her. And a terrible gust of compassion for David Legère seized her. All her love for him rose within her in a mighty flood of protectiveness. Then, as in a dream, she heard the front door close, and her stepfather stood before her.

Felix Dorion's face was like a leaden mask. He had been drinking all day and all the evening. But he was far from drunk, and he knew the girl had heard.

"Hold thy tongue," he said in sinister counsel, "or it will cost thee dear. Dost thou promise?"

She nodded, choking. But it was not enough.

Dorion seized her arm so that she screamed with pain. "Say it!" he commanded. "Say the words!"

"I—I promise," she cried out.

The girl staggered up the stairs to the little bedroom overhead. She seemed filled with raging things of fire, but with the door of her life forever frozen shut.

She fell suddenly on her knees by the little bed.

And she prayed.

CHAPTER III

ON CORPUS CHRISTI

IT was the feast of Corpus Christi in St. Anne's, and the entire village was at holiday. The men were pitifully ill at ease in starched linen and leather shoes. The women represented a rather bewildering display of finery, and of periods; the young girls were in white; the children were combed and washed—and wretched.

It was the hour for the services in the little churchyard, the culmination of the day's religious duty, and every communicant was supposed to attend. Already the men were straggling up.

Back of the church, just within the fringe of the woods, Danny Shane skulked and smoked a hurried pipe away from the surveillance of Mrs. Danny. From behind a great pile of cordwood, a little to one side, Tamant Boudreau sat, peering out furtively.

Suddenly Tamant ducked down into concealment. Hastily he unlaced his unaccustomed shoes and pulled them vindictively from his pinched and aching feet. He stripped off the heavy, new-knitted socks, tucked them hurriedly into a crevice in the wood, and pulled the shoes back on his bare feet, stepping forth in vast relief.

Inside the church the service had begun. A belated figure loitered up from the shore. Jo Michelle, the habitual renegade from Mass, stepped a little to one side and scratched his head reflectively. Should he go to Mass, or—should he?

Something caught his eyes along the inner side of

the pile of cordwood. He sauntered over and drew out Tamant's socks. Jo grinned amiably. Without hesitation he sat down, removed his own socks, and put them on. He held up his own disreputable foot-gear.

"The Good Book says, 'Keep thy feet from evil,' and it is evil to have such socks," he said, half aloud.

He rose swiftly. Some one was coming through the woods. A moment, and his wary look vanished. He stepped forward eagerly.

"Graciette!" he exclaimed happily. Then as she came toward him his own face went grave. "What is it, Graciette? What's the matter?"

Jo had loved Graciette quite helplessly for years, and now there was a depth of doglike worship in his eyes, as he noted in the girl's face the pitiful ravages wrought of the last few days. "Tell me, Graciette, has Felix—"

"No, Jo. Not that." To encounter kindliness overwhelmed her, and she turned away her face in sudden yielding to tears.

Jo patted her hand awkwardly. "Tell me, Graciette—tell Jo."

She turned to him, quite calmly now. "Jo, I am afraid."

"Of what, Graciette?"

"For David; for St. Anne's. Oh, Jo, I—I am afraid of life itself!"

"But what has happened, Graciette. Tell me. I can help!"

"Oh, I cannot," she moaned in her misery, "and even if I could it would do no good. Oh, Jo, it has gone beyond us to help. It is only in the hands of the good God himself."

He stared at her helplessly. The first worshipers began to appear out on the steps of the church, to attend the priest in solemn procession to the little

churchyard. And now, suddenly, the girl clutched the man's coat.

"Jo, watch David—every hour of every day, and try to keep him from harm! Promise me!"

"I promise," he said wonderingly, and they followed the others.

The little ceremony in the burying ground completed, the priest moved back to the church, and the solemn rank of worshipers filed along after for benediction. It was but a few moments, and the service was over.

Out in the churchyard the men melted away swiftly, stealthily. The younger element promptly divested themselves of their devotions to take up the matter of festivities quite nondevotional. From now on the day was to be made the most riotous of the year.

Meanwhile, the housewives lingered in knots along the way to the village, to gossip of affairs of utmost importance. At one spot, "Trotty" Shane, the over-stout, overgarrulous, but loving-hearted spouse of the smith, was standing in a knot of others, all closely intent on the subject in hand. Facing her towered Flavie Boudreau, a tall, grim grenadier of a woman, as harsh in outlook as Tamant, her husband, was gentle.

And now Trotty was saying placidly: "A well-a-day! It's always the way with the young—always to be enjoyin' themselves wherever the Lord puts 'em, and to the divvle an' all with the likes of care!"

"But, madame, it is not as though she had come to St. Anne's to visit with her kindred." This was the stalwart Flavie, now. "This being the case, one would look for gayety, for *la jeunesse*. But her folk in the States—what of them? Are they not worried about her? And has she ever written them—tell me that!" Madame Flavie jerked her head erect and set her lips.

"It's the Lord himself that knows," responded Trotty. "But it's a real little beauty she is, and one can't expect her to be sorrowin' over what she can't help. And as for Davie Legère—I don't blame her for chasin' of him. He's the grand, strappin' lad of all *this* coast, so he is, and when he comes into his own"—Trotty shook her head wishfully—"ah, a girl could do no better. I can't blame her for bein' young and carefree."

"*Mais non!*" cried a new voice. "She is not!"

It was the little Widow Saulnier who had joined the group—a soft little person, who had nevertheless exploded a bomb among them.

"She is not happy—not gay! I, Nanette Saulnier, say it! At times she is wretched—miserable to make one pity. And of a restlessness—ah-h, it is as though one caged a tiger, and took from her her whelps!"

"At times, in my little house, I hear her walk, walk, walk in her room until the night is well spent. It is to drive one mad with perplexity and comparison. But"—she shook her head in settled finality—"but, somehow, one may not question her. She is not the kind!"

"Be careful!" cautioned Madame Flavie softly, raising a hand in warning. She was looking over the heads of the others, and all faced about. "There is *one* young woman who suffers as much as the other appears to rejoice."

She indicated Gracielle Dorion, who had come to stand by the church steps, and stood looking tensely up into the kindly countenance of Père André, the priest. And then, as they watched, out from the church stepped the tall figure of David Legère, wrapped still in the glamour of his devotions, and a moment later the striking little figure of the cast-away followed.

She had on the cleverly cut little frock and smart

little hat in which she had first come among them, both adroitly freshened, and she stood out among them sharply. David was moving toward the priest and Gracielle when the girl behind spoke his name softly, and he turned, cap in hand, and waited.

The knot of housewives saw the young man smile and grow red as the girl made some laughing remark. They saw Gracielle, her face suddenly contracted, speak a swift word to the priest, and they heard the priest call out cheerily: "A word with thee, David—when you have finished with mademoiselle."

And then the watchers gasped at so unheard-of a proceeding. The boy smiled back, amiably but firmly, and said: "I go to the headland with mam-selle, m'sieu'. *Then* will I see you!" And the pair turned away.

Looks of amazement and tensest interest flew about in the knot of women. Then Flavie Boudreau nodded her head slowly. She had overheard enough of the girl's talk to guess what was in the air.

"At the dance this evening," she said darkly to the circle of women, "it will be of interest to watch!"

The couple discussed had taken a path just inside the woods back of the church, a path that ran along the margin of the forest and came out upon the lofty heights at the Legère end of the village, commanding the sea. For the first few rods they traveled in silence.

Legère's heart was heating rather sturdily. He seemed lately to have come into some new estate of fulfillment, of consummation. Some tremendous element of his manhood had awakened. To-day he seemed vitally, almost alarmingly *alive*. Whatever had come to life within him was a tremendous thing. It was bewilderingly sweet—and quite terrible.

And the girl? She walked by his side pensively.

For days she had been dreading the actual getting to work in the part she was to play—had been restless, wretched.

Now that the time was come, she felt awed, somehow; always, with Legère, she felt herself in the presence of big things—just what she could not have told.

She glanced about. They were come into a little glade in the woods, a little realm of such enchanting, almost eerie beauty as might have served for the veritable birthplace of the young summer itself. It was a little forest of birch, young growth plumed in tender, feathery leafage, through which the sunlight sifted down, spreading a sea of palest green light below.

The girl seized the boy's arm. She pointed upward to the world of interlacing slim brown wands, strung thick with their burden of green. "See, my friend. It is as though a passing migration of pale-green lunar moths had settled thickly all along the boughs—to tarry, and tremble, and flutter."

There was no mistaking his reaction to beauty at any rate. She was quite startled at the pleased approval that leaped toward her from his shining eyes.

"That is very beautiful, mamselle—that which you have said." He looked aloft again, happily, taking in all the phases of the fairylike beauty in the light of her apt description.

The girl started to walk on. "You like beauty, monsieur?"

He looked at her shyly. "The moon on the sea; the—the wild running of a doe—a little child's hands, make me feel—oh, I cannot tell you how, mamselle. I like to look at them, but I can never tell why." He finished confusedly: "I have never thought much about it."

The girl hardly heard. It had been her custom in the times she had been with him to direct her at-

tack like the swift, bewildering flashes of a jay. To-day she was in a graver mood—the impressive church service, perchance; the significance of the day.

She turned suddenly. "Tell me of Père André," she commanded. "Do you like him much?"

"Yes, mamselle." His eyes left her face to stare ahead gravely, thoughtfully. "Père André has—has been like my father and my friend at the same time, and he—he had helped me train my soul."

The boy floundered on, and the girl marveled at his mental gropings toward the fine, the clean, the true. He turned to her earnestly. "One cannot come up with one's dreams without the blessing of God—of—of the church—think you, mamselle? Well, Père André has seen to all that for me—he has ever—has ever stood between me and evil."

He paused, with a little laugh. "I suppose one would say Jo Michelle was my—my friend of the body. All my early life Jo helped me and—and protected me, that way; but Père André"—his face grew earnest once more—"Père André is the true friend of my soul, and that comes first, mamselle." He frowned a little in his acute mental effort. "I cannot tell you how I feel toward Père André."

The woods were thinning. They were coming out into clear spaces that led upward to the headland. There was an indefinable reverence in the day. Try as she might, the girl could not shake it off.

To-day she had determined to feel out accurately the lay of the land. It was like preparing for a campaign—one that might be swiftest and surest. And, to her vague uneasiness, she was learning that everything that she was to assail was bulwarked round and about by the holy—by the spiritual.

And now—something struck her as ominously strange—right ahead of them, on the very crest of the headland, towered a crude, weather-beaten,

wooden cross. Immediately she saw that the headland marked a *calvaire*, a shrine, a place of meditation and of prayer.

As they approached, she noted the tiny niche cut in the upright of the cross, a little holy of holies, crudely lined with faded little artificial flowers, and containing a tiny statuette of the Virgin. The young man, hat in hand, knelt a moment by the foot of the cross with bowed head, and almost unconsciously the girl dropped too.

Afar, the sea held itself passive, smooth, majestically serene, as though it could never be moved to unrest if stirred to turbulence.

Then the boy rose to his feet. His face held a new light now, puzzling to the girl until he spoke.

"This *calvaire* was erected to the memory of my father, mamselle. Perchance they have told you of my father."

He kept on, and the girl noted now that his thought flowed clear and unrestrained—knew that he was speaking of a thing so powerful in him as to overcome any halting uncertainties of his speech.

"My father was a great man. He came into this coast when it was but a wilderness, and he laid hold on it and brought it into submission when few other men could have stood the terrible hardship. He saw the greatness of its possibilities at the first. But he was not spared to bring them out."

The girl was impressed now—she could not help it. She seemed swept along on things new and strange to her.

The boy was answering the question in her eyes. "The sea claimed him. It is one of the things I could never understand—the why of it. But perchance a day will come, mamselle, when I shall know."

He seemed wholly oblivious now to aught but the things that moved him. "I can always recall what

he said to me out there, when the sea was covering him, and he was setting me ashore on a raft. 'Live for St. Anne's, my son; live for her, fight for her, die for her; for the good God has given thy father a vision of great things for St. Anne's.'

"It seemed that I, myself, was to be spared to carry on, mamselle. I drifted ashore, and I have tried to take my father's place in things. And it is only in the last few weeks that the real greatness of his dreams has come to me." He paused a moment, and said: "St. Anne's has it in her to become one of the greatest ports of this part of Canada."

The girl stirred uneasily. She was being overwhelmed, somehow, carried out and under by a mighty tide of things she could not have guessed. And then—down on the shore she saw a man sitting, staring at the sea. And almost as though she were beside him could she see the sharpness of features and lynxlike eyes of the man who had been rescued with her.

Deeply she shuddered—an overwhelming access of loathing for the distant figure jolted through her every fiber. Suddenly she turned and seized the boy by the arm.

"We have become morbid, *mon ami*. It will never do. See——"

She pointed down where the people of the village were assembled here and there, watching the games, the sports, the contests of strength and skill—outlets of holiday spirit that was the aftermath of the holyday observances.

"Let's go down, monsieur. And then"—her whole presence now seemed aflame with the vivid spirit of renewed life—"to-night I am bidden to the dance *chez Comeau*. I shall see you there."

CHAPTER IV

LACASSE GOES LOGO

THE great kitchen of Narcisse Comeau rang to the rafters with a wild, fierce hilarity. Half the active life of the village was there—old folks, young folks, and two wood boxfuls of babies. The place effervesced with life, with spirits—save in the obscurity of one far corner, where a single nonparticipant sat.

A sharp *rat-tat* collected attention to a focus. Narcisse stood on a chair, tapping with its bow on the back of a violin. “*Messieurs! Mesdames! Attendez-moi!*” he called out. “For the next dance—a new fiddler!” There was gleeful interest. “A *grand* fiddler!” Narcisse grinned and achieved the ultimate. “The grandest fiddler on the North Shore. My friends, I give you Monsieur Jo Michelle!”

Shouts—handclapping—wildly exaggerated applause! And “Jo! Jo Michelle! Monsieur l’artist! Premier violoniste!” Jo always lent added zest when he played.

Grinning in happy good nature, Jo climbed cautiously up to a chair on the reënforced table, and, amid much laughing comment tested its strength. Then: “*Vos dames pour un quadrille!*” he called out.

There was a mad scurry. Partners were quarried out of corners, out of other rooms, with the wild, noisy excitement of hounds after hares. The younger element skated on its heels.

Narcisse was already equipped with a partner. There was a girl in a flame-colored frock, achieved

deftly from one of his bolts of cotton and a package of dye, that had transfixed the drab hues of the party like a flashing javelin of color. And Narcisse was leading this one forth.

Just within the parlor, David Legère was bowing low before Madame Narcisse and saying shyly: "If madame would—"

Madame was a plump, little, pleasant-faced Nova Scotian. "I suppose I must, David Legère; but after dancing with thistledown like mamselle, I warn ye I'm no—"

"*Saluez, tous!*" sang out Jo. The fiddle rang out. Then: "Circle all! Eight around!"

The kitchen reeled in dizzy circles, the violin chattered inspiringly through the measures of "The White Cockade."

Then: "To the center—all!"

The throng swept together on a rushing wave of merriment and—a sinister touch—the movement revealed the black, huddled figure in the far corner, glaring about him restlessly, dangerously.

"Turn all. No man's a man who leaves de lady's feet on the floor!" Jo shouted impishly. The men responded gallantly amid shrill squeals of ecstatic terror.

"Center all, and change," shouted Jo.

Again the bunched figure in the corner was revealed. The beadlike eyes glittered dangerously along the long, animallike nose. The man lurched occasionally, as he followed the dancers with his eyes. He was not quite sober.

The dance figure broke up in a mélée of flushed, heated faces, moving for seats, for water at the sink, for out-of-doors air.

In the lull, a man's voice began to sing one of the old habitant songs of the North coast—his voice thick and treacly in a very abandon of sentiment, as was the custom.

*"Isabeau s'y promene le long de son jardin,
Le long de son jardin sur le bord de l'isle.
Le long de son jardin sur le bord de l'eau—
Sur le bord du vaisseau."*

Across the room, the girl in red stopped stock-still. She forgot herself completely in sudden interest. The song was an ancient one, from the very heart of Canada, of coast Canada, quaint and moving with its lowly tale of the sea.

Involuntarily the girl's hand stole out and closed on David Legère's arm by her side. It was wholly unconscious—she did not know that she did it. But through an opening in the crowd the man hunched gloomily in the corner saw the gesture, and began to uncoil himself deliberately, his beady eyes glittering like a rat's.

In the round of hearty applause, some one called sharply for silence. Narcisse Comeau had been watching the evident intense appreciation of the girl in red. Now he lifted his head above the crowd, his hand raised.

"Who would like a song from mamselle, here—a newer song than ours?"

There was a moment of hushed surprise, and then an uproar of applause. The girl was staring, quite confused.

"But, monsieur—I do not sing." It was quite true, according to her standards, but immediately she saw that they thought her simply coyly backward, which she detested; and, rather than that: "I will do my best, monsieur." She bowed to Narcisse and followed.

Madame Comeau led a pushing, jostling throng into the parlor in the front of her house. It was a proud moment for madame—her parlor held the only piano in St. Anne's. It was an opulent instrument of a Montreal trading house, displaying all sorts of

ornamentation in its massive elegance, and offering to the performer three additional pedals, representing three startling transformations in its music, which thus added richly to its versatility.

The girl sat down, and her fingers achieved a single chord—low keyed, mellow, solemn. She held it, simply, until it faded out. But it did things, somehow, to the assembled guests crowding the place. The silence grew heavy, dead. Then her voice began:

*“Les heures passées auprès de toi
Sont comme des perles enfilée.”*

In a sophisticated gathering “The Rosary” would doubtless have been hackneyed. But with these people it brought forth the thing of God, of faith, of church, constantly in the background of their life, and focused it on human love—and as such it was irresistible.

The girl raised her eyes to young Legère, who stared back, entranced, and her voice rose to the great, heart-wrung cry:

*“Baiser la croix—enfin—!
Bai—ser la——!”*

“Hold!” some one screamed from the doorway.
“I have something to say about this woman!”

The man, Lacasse, who had lurked all evening in the corner, stood on the threshold, his face working frightfully in its grip of insane passion.

In the second of paralyzed silence the girl at the piano had turned and cowered back, her arm outflung wildly along the keyboard. She was trying to speak. Words began issuing from her throat, half-formed, distorted sounds, incoherent from terror.

Then she caught young Legère's arm, her white

face came appealingly up to his. "Stop him, monsieur! For the love of God, do not let him speak!"

Legère wheeled to cross the room.

Lacasse began speaking again to the wondering, transfixed roomful. "This woman is *not*—"

A heavy hand was clapped over his mouth. Simply, as might an obedient little boy doing as he was told, Legère lifted Lacasse, fighting like a tiger, and bore him off.

Outside, in the yard, the fog held heavily, closing in, dense and impenetrable, about the pushing, swaying crowd of men following out. Legère set his burden down well out in the yard, and the men standing back by the house watched intently. Then, with his mouth freed, Lacasse again screamed out: "I tell you—"

And now, from the gloom behind, a half-visible arm reached swiftly out to him, and Lacasse disappeared. The crowd of men could hear low, muttering voices retreating swiftly off into the blackness, but they saw the man Lacasse no more that night.

Down on the shore, a few moments later, Cesaire Lacasse stood cowering in the light of a lantern before the waiting Saul Budro. There was something epic about Budro's wrath. He indicated the two men and spoke.

"Damn you! By watching out on you, these men have saved your life! I can't start anything round here by croakin' you now, but if you so much as open your mouth till I give the word I'll take you by the throat and shuck you of your everlastin' soul."

He pushed the terror-stricken creature along ahead of him. "Meanwhile, I'm keeping you with me a bit, out of the way of temptation!"

CHAPTER V

SELF-REVELATION

NEXT morning, in the little cottage of the Widow Saulnier, the girl arose with the dawn. She had not slept at all. All through the night, over and over again before her eyes, was enacted the dread scene at Comeau's—over and over again did she feel anew the sickening terror that had possessed her as she had felt Legère's eyes upon her.

She passed swiftly to the window and ran up the blind. It was quite glorious, the morning. Smoke arose from a score of chimneys; beyond, the sea crinkled brightly and busily in the early morning glitter, and far off by the ledges a long, black line of gently heaving power boats already fished on the slack of the tide.

Life was early at its business of—life. As for her, herself—

In the clear, revealing light of the new day, with honest activity all about her, she felt herself out-worlded, an idler, a pernicious idler—an undesirable. She knew it suddenly, unmistakably.

At breakfast the Widow Saulnier spoke to her of her restlessness, and then with startling frankness began to question her calmly. "Mademoiselle, I like thee much. And I am old enough to ask it: Art thou in love?"

The dark eyes looked steadily into her own. "No, madame, I am not in love. Love does not come when it is not desired."

But—David Legère, mamselle! You see, we all in the village love this young man—love him and are

proud of him—and all can see how it is with him, can see how love has blossomed in his heart, although he himself may not know it.

"And so, mamselle, if, as you say, you do not love him, you surely would not be one to do him harm—is it not so?" pleadingly. "You do not wish to harm him, mamselle?"

The little widow's talk stirred strange, gnawing things in the girl's breast. She raised her teacup to avoid reply, an instinctive impulse, femininely evasive. But the little woman across seized upon the subterfuge with equal instinct. And a great wonderment—a deep, profound puzzlement—grew strong within her.

Out of it all one thought smote her with chill certainty. "Ah, mamselle, I am a foolish old woman, perchance! But look out for David Legère when he—wakes."

A moment later the girl was in her little room, pinning on the crisp little hat. Already destiny was on her trail. She had undertaken to meddle with the vital things of life—in meddling with the ambitions of David Legère, she had encountered a life passion.

There *were* life passions that were like avalanches. And now she realized that she had become engaged in prying one loose. And already was she forced to keep moving before it.

There was no turning back; she must keep on, and now she must hurry. For already was her tarrying in St. Anne's beginning to look suspicious—already were the villagers regarding her in gentle askance.

Out in the little yard, she saw Legère's boat, heading in from the fishing ground. She made her way down toward the shore.

She greeted young Legère brightly, asking him a torrent of questions about the catch, the weather, the Golden Hope—a dozen things. And on this

morning, for the first time, he seemed to reflect her light mood, and tried to meet her questions with replies equally spirited. Jo Michelle stood quietly to one side and watched.

At length she stopped rather short in her airy chatter. "Monsieur, will you walk with me a little? I have something to say to you."

Well along the shore, she began, haltingly: "What did you think, my friend, of—of—last night?"

He laughed softly. "Narcisse is a great host, mamselle. His parties are always great fun! And your song——"

She made a little deprecatory gesture. "I do not mean that. I meant of that man who—who——"

"I did not think, mamselle. The man was drunk."

"Yes. That was it," she agreed reflectively. "You—you see, he has been in love with me, and—and——"

"But you do not love him, mamselle?" It was calmly spoken, but the girl caught the tense thrill of his restraint.

"I loathe him!" Her eyes were very black; her little hands clenched suddenly. She was surprised at her own vehemence.

They walked in silence a space. The girl swerved suddenly and sat down on a log, and the young man sat beside her. She began speaking swiftly, hurriedly.

"You are quite wonderful, monsieur. Do you realize it?" Her manner was calm, deliberate. She seemed telling what was only open conviction. "I have never seen any one like you."

The young man stared out to sea in obvious confusion. Reply was beyond him—expression of *any* sort. But his heart was thudding excitedly.

"I can see," the girl went on deliberately, "how the people of St. Anne's are proud of you; how they depend upon you—trust you; how they look to you

for their future emancipation." She paused, feeling her way gropingly. "But do you think—are you quite sure that you are planning wisely for yourself, to remain in St. Anne's?"

It was an inspiration. Even as she spoke, a course of action sprang, full grown, into her mind—a course of action dazzling in its perfection. If she could but get this man to *leave* St. Anne's—could but enthuse him with the opportunities offered by the world—all her problems would be solved.

If she could do that, and could manage the sale of the weir in doing it, why, he would have received full value for his shore holdings, and she would have done him a real kindness in starting him forth. Her heart underwent a great lightening.

Legère was regarding her uncertainly. "What do you mean, mamselle?"

Now she faced him in a little, impatient fury. "Why do you stay here—a man of *your* promise?"

"But—but—St. Anne's, mamselle. I stay for what I know she will become!"

"What *will* she become?" she said, her tone bordering on profound contempt. "A mere fish town. A few canneries, smelling to the heavens. A festering herding place for the scum of all the coast, drawn thither by the crowded seasons and the big wage. A sordid niche in the edge of the continent for the easy overspawning of riffraff cast off by towns and cities all over. And you—you might become—"

"Wait, mamselle!" earnestly. "That is not what I strive for! Workers, yes. But clean workers! Honest workers! Workers who will want to lend their own shoulders, their own strong backs, to the work my father started!"

"Faugh! Where are they coming from—these gentle laborers of æsthetic mold? And why would they come here to this place?"

The boy's eyes glittered. "We will *grow* them! We will have schools that will produce them. And all things represented here that make for happiness, for interest, for progress!"

"And who is going to do all this? It is the work of a great mind—of a mind trained in the things of the world, in the things of finance, in things of the mind itself!" She stopped a moment, and went on with pitiless directness, sheering through the man's dreams ruthlessly with the two-edged sword of her experienced wisdom. "Have you such a mind, monsieur?"

The youth was gripping the rough bark of the log with powerful hands. "I can *become* such a man!" he said tensely.

On his words the girl suddenly seized on what was the logical completion of her new plan. She would show him that he owed it to St. Anne's to first fit himself for leadership by going out into the world. Now, impetuously, she blazed forth.

"But *where?*" She swept the village with a disparaging hand. "Can you do it here in this place? Can you develop the qualifications to conquer men, and minds, and circumstance, *here*? I tell you truly," she went on almost fiercely, "you would be a lamb for the shearers! You would be but a gull for the first sharper to pluck! And St. Anne's, and your dreams for her future, would go tumbling down to oblivion, leaving behind but the echo of a laugh!" Her vehemence had carried the girl far.

"What—what would you do, mamselle?"

"Do? Leave this place for a space! Get out into the world and learn of it! Get together money enough, and go learn of men and the ways of men, so then you can deal with men. A year, two years—three! Then you can take up your dreams, perchance, and with absolute success!"

"But—but the *weir!* The—the——"

"Sell it. Turn it over to this man Dorion." She laughed wryly. "It is the business of such as he." Then: "In selling it you sell neither the fish nor the future. And some day you can come back—"

"Mamselle"—it was gravely spoken—"why do you advise me thus? What—what is your own interest? Your—your earnestness tells me there must be something—"

Tension, concentration, held her; all superficial things flew afar from the girl's manner now. She regarded him thoughtfully from a new background, and her eyes were clear and honest and wondering.

"Because I like you, my friend." She noted that something leaped in his eyes. But she rose. "And so what I have told you is all true."

"You have given me much to consider." The boy's eyes lost themselves in vague visioning. "But, as I see it now, I cannot leave St. Anne's."

Back to his mind, clear cut, clean, came the day he had made his solemn vow with Graciette Dorion on the headland. "Long ago I made a solemn oath, by the memory of my father, that I would not leave until that which I had set out to do was done. When I am sure that we are to be coupled with the world by a railroad, then, perhaps, I may feel I can stop long enough to make myself fit to make St. Anne's. But not until then."

CHAPTER VI

OUTLAWRY OF THE SEA

S~~AUL BUDRO~~ sat contentedly before the huge fire-place in his own log shack, like a great, bulky idol in the firelight. In twenty years Saul's business had become a big thing. No petty smuggler, he! Of late years he sat back, mostly, studied conditions and affairs, and directed a far-reaching organization.

And right now Saul was facing the most glittering business outlook of all his dramatic career. For years had he hovered the North Coast like a bird of prey, but never before had there been such a wind-fall in his lines of business.

As in fashions, vocations, and amusements, styles seemed to be changing constantly, even in the matter of man's sins. At present the hectic realm of dissipation was offering a legion of new things in drinks, drugs and narcotics.

Many of these came from outside countries, and changes were being made, therefore, in the home laws that forefended them. Lastly, two nations had been dabbling their destinies in the matter of rum, and, at the outcome, Saul Budro lifted his soul in glee and was happy.

The liquor question was the biggest question in years. And the situation was ideal. In one country it was banned. Good! In the other country it was banned—*some*.

Therefore, as a medium for Saul's business, rum was proving ideal—and more. To be sure, Chinese ran up into three or four hundred dollars a head—

by no means to be sneezed at—and, in addition, he always brought his side line of cans of opium, which the underground clans, far down in the States, across the border, took off his hands at a price sufficient to enable the Chinese to buy a little start. Saul had his tithe on the Chinese, himself, and also a goodly return on his accompanying opium.

It had always been very satisfactory, as a line. But under this new state of things he could load his holds going south with compact cases of priceless liquor, and in each craft consider a few Chinese, too, for Chinese were always self-movable and stowed themselves.

So Saul had been trying it out. And it had responded hugely—better than he had ever dreamed. And that was why, more than ever, he must be left to remain undisturbed in St. Anne's; that was why he *must* have larger quarters, and specially constructed; that was why he *must* possess the site of Rocky Channel, and the weir that stood on it.

So far, things seemed to be running smoothly for him to get it. At realization of all it meant, Saul rubbed his hands together in vast content and spat cheerfully into the fire.

Behind him in the shadows a man was pacing restlessly, his long, white face and close-set eyes emerging intermittently from the darkness, wearing the baleful, hunted glare of a newly caged wolf. At length a sudden impulse drove him desperately out into the ring of firelight, where he stood facing the figure in the chair.

"M'sieu,'" he began in high-pitched frenzy, "if I must stay here any longer in this place I shall go mad!"

Saul Budro removed his pipe and spat again into the fire. "What's the matter with this place?" he grunted carelessly. His mind had been busy with things of importance. He reverted to them.

"Can you ask?" Lacasse screamed. "I am buried alive! Up here nothing but the sea, that is driving me mad to watch day after day, and the spruces that mourn constantly." The man was almost crying in his wretched discontent.

The bulky figure still stared on into the fire. "That's all right," contentedly. "But until you make up your mind that you can keep your face shut you're going to stay up here."

The eyes of Lacasse took on an added gleam. "If I am to die, m'sieu', what difference as to how! I may as well get down to the village and tell all I know."

"You wouldn't be worrying about *living* quarters after that, if you did." Budro looked up now, according the man all his interest. "I'll get you a chance back up to Quebec. How'll that strike you? You've been a damned nuisance from the first, and I tell you now you may as well go—*your* game is a dead one, at any rate."

"I'm not so sure about that, m'sieu'!" Lacasse's figure relaxed a little; he leered inscrutably.

"What do you mean?" Saul's face was lowering.

"Since I have come to know the young man, I feel it is not going to be what you call a 'walk-over' for Mamselle Justine Ducharme. She may get him to love her—yes, very like—but to get him to give up any of his plans for this village——"

The door opened. Justine Ducharme entered on a gust of rain. She flung off her head covering and sank upon a bench by the fire.

The ivory whiteness of her face, under its gleaming waves of black hair, shot immediate distinction throughout the crude roughness of the room. There was an air of weariness, almost of dejection, in her drooping shoulders. She stared into the fire a silent moment, then she straightened up.

"I have made but little progress," she announced wearily.

Lacasse wheeled about to conceal a look of triumph. He thrust his hands deep into his pockets; he teetered airily on one foot and traced out a careless little swaggering design on the floor with his toe. The girl regarded him deliberately, placing him a million miles away.

Budro was staring at her through narrowed lids. "Why?"

The girl flashed a sharp look at him. "Do you know Legère?" she asked, half contemptuously. "If you do, you would not ask." She folded her arms and stared back again at the fire. "I have never known a man like him."

"Are you weakening?" There was something ominous in it.

Dead silence for a moment. Then: "If I had known about—about him, and about these people, I could not have attempted it."

"Which means, I'm thinking, that you're wantin' to quit. Is that so?"

Fiercely the girl indicated the strolling Lacasse in the shadows. "Can you observe *him*—and ask me that?"

Budro sat back. He was but partially reassured. It was vitally important just now that he should get at the stark truth of things, and he set about it craftily.

"I suppose the winnin' over of this young man *would* be a trifle hard. I've come to know lately that him and one o' the little village girls have been sweethearts a lifetime, and I suppose he's bound to stick." He was watching her narrowly.

The girl stared on, immovable, revealing nothing. Then, without moving her head or shifting her gaze from the flames, she asked: "Who is she?"

In the background, Lacasse, too, waited eagerly

for a reply. If the man in the case also had a sweetheart, it might be a useful thing for him, Lacasse, to know.

Budro had stooped for a coal to light his pipe. "She's the daughter of the notary, Dorion. Pretty as a picture, and a damned good cook, too. I can see where Legère probably thinks a lot of her." He was watching the girl narrowly.

Now she turned and looked at him squarely. "You are quite wrong," she observed, as if reading his thoughts. "I am *not* in love with him." She turned back to the fire.

Budro's eyes flashed sudden appreciation of her cleverness. "I believe you," he said. He began rubbing his hands. "That leaves us free to go on. And I've got a scheme of action told off that can't possibly fail."

He turned to the attentive Lacasse and jerked a thumb over his shoulder toward the door. "You can go down now and stay with the men a while."

"But, m'sieu'"—Lacasse was fawning now, ingratiatingly; above all this, now, he wanted to stay—"I may as well stop here to-night, and—"

"Get out! If you behave yourself, perhaps I'll let you go back down to the village to-morrow!"

"Yes, m'sieu'. I go." Lacasse reached for his cap with alacrity. It would be good to get back in the village—with what he knew now. Outside the door he grinned delightedly in the dark.

So Legère, himself, had a sweetheart—the daughter of Dorion. That was *very* interesting. Perhaps she had in her the makings of a most useful ally in all this. Who knew? Once in the village he would investigate. Lacasse was joyously light of heart all at once.

Behind him the freebooter was saying to the girl: "You said you were not in love with young Legère, but you did not say he was not in love with you."

The girl stared on into the fire. She made no reply.

"All right. That is as it *should* be. Now what was the one thing he told you kept him in St. Anne's?"

"The prospect of a railroad."

"Even so. I knew without asking. Now listen. To-morrow I'm making down coast for a couple of days. When I come back he can be having his railroad."

The girl was all interest now. "Do you mean it? How?"

In two minutes Saul Budro had sketched out the salient points of his plan, a plan which revealed the peerless deviltry of a mind such as his, a plan which, knowing Legère, amazed the girl with its inescapable simplicity. "So, you see, you'll be givin' him his railroad. When I get back you want to have him ready for the gift of his life."

The girl went home through the darkness, thrilled to the core with a strange feeling of helpless resentment.

CHAPTER VII

SAUL'S ALLIANCE

FAR down the coast, in the Halifax office of Gowdy, Doan & Robertson, a group of men sat in earnest conference. There was an air of uneasy anxiety in things. They were listening to their local manager, Wiggin, from St. Anne's, a bloodless, little black-clad man of accounts, who was becoming almost indelicate in his perturbation.

"I tell you this new venture is bringing to St. Anne's business scouts from all along the coast." He settled his cuffs nervously. "They're coming up there even from the States. I feel assured, gentlemen, by this time next year, unless something should happen to change things, that Gowdy, Doan & Robertson, if I may say so, will be—will be buried under in St. Anne's!"

"That has never happened yet, my man!" This from Eleazer Gowdy, at the head of the table. Gowdy was a heavy man, with a massive face. He applied his weighty mentality to things with the efficient aplomb of a pile driver.

He eyed the manager from St. Anne's reprovingly. "We have handled the fish of this country, sir, a good many years without interference, and I am of the opinion we may still continue so to do."

"Yes, sir. Very well, sir. But I'm sure you don't quite comprehend the situation." The local manager smiled wanly. "The fishermen up there are an odd crew. And if I may say so, sir, they've never been very well content with the position our branch holds in things up there."

Eleazer Gowdy raised pained eyebrows. "Why so, if I may ask?"

"You wouldn't understand unless you were there, sir." Wiggin wiped his neck with his pocket handkerchief. "You recall the place was founded by a Frenchman, Legère, from up St. Lawrence River way. He saw great possibilities in it, and these Frenchmen up there now have always felt the place would have been developed more if this man had lived. Just now they're backing his son to carry out his father's plans."

Robertson spoke. He was the newest and youngest partner. He had been educated in the States. His was a clean, generously working mind, the complete opposite of Eleazer Gowdy's, and both recognized it.

"I'm probably pretty slow in this thing, but just where does all this stack up so much gloom for us. If the place booms, why don't we boom with it?" He exploded a match on his thumb nail and lit a cigarette.

"Don't you see, sir," the black-clad little manager wheeled, "they're hoping to get the sardine canners to go up there. Canneries will mean that we lose our line fishermen. And it will mean—the railroad."

Young Robertson snapped the ash off his cigarette absently. "You say 'railroad' as if you meant the hearse."

"I am not so sure but that it *would* be—for us!" Wiggin quivered at his own temerity.

Robertson glanced up sharply. "I'm damned if I get you—"

"Proceed, Mr. Wiggin!" interrupted Eleazer Gowdy authoritatively, and young Robertson sat back.

Wiggin went on. "With the railroad running down to St. Anne's, we can whistle for the fish out-

put." Wiggin's eyes snapped. "Every Frenchman there will be shipping his own fish all over America!"

"Well, I'm a Dutchman!" breathed young Robertson in sudden enlightenment.

Wiggin was on his feet, encouraged to the point of rashness. "This young Legère I speak of, together with the priest up there, has already got the railroad looking in that direction. They *could* put in a coal pocket to good advantage along that coast somewhere, and if this place is going to boom, why, that's the place.

"The cannery are sitting back to see what comes of the railroad proposition—without a road in there they wouldn't be so eager. So it seems now as if the railroad might soon be only the matter of a satisfactory site. If they go down there with a coal pocket it means a particular kind of a shore site. It's mostly uncertain sand bottom in the vicinity of the village, and some of the possible sites might mean a fortune in construction.

"Looks like the old and reliable firm of Gowdy, Doan & Robertson had been nominated for the can up there," observed Robertson reflectively to his cigarette.

Gowdy raised a rebuking hand. Then, to Wiggin: "You wrote there was a way out of all this. What is your solution?"

The man's face took on an almost frightened look. "I—I've brought my solution with me, sir. But first I want to tell you about him." Wiggin moistened his lips. "This man is also one of the original settlers of St. Anne's. He was there when Pierre Legère himself was alive. He—he has established—has established certain activities of his own there—activities," hastily, "which, if I may say so, I strongly disapprove.

"But that, sir, is nothing to us. His interests are

in common with ours, but for a different reason. The railroad coming to St. Anne's would ruin the place for him as well as for us. He has a plan of operation which he would like to carry out which would solve the entire difficulty. He wants certain coöperation from us. His name, gentlemen, is—is Saul Budro!"

"Well, the damned pirate!" young Robertson exploded, and slammed his chair to the floor in emphasis.

Eleazer Gowdy drove a heavy fist down on the table before him. "Wait, young man!" He stared an icy moment at the junior partner. "Please remember we're not taking him into the business!" He turned slowly to Wiggin. "Bring him in, sir!"

Saul Budro stood just within the door, running a lightning glance over the room. Then, hat in hand, he moved deliberately to a chair and sat down. His eyes had come to rest on the senior partner. With unerring accuracy he had picked his man.

Gowdy was speaking. "Mr. Wiggin has told us something of the situation up in St. Anne's. What is your proposition?"

Budro crossed his legs comfortably and regarded the other with cool deliberation.

"First, let's get the thing right. You've got more at stake than I have. I can move somewhere else if I have to. I don't want to, but I'd still live.

"With you people it means the loss of one of your best ports, and the splitting up of the business in many another port up on that coast, where the fishermen would boat their fish to St. Anne's and ship from there by rail." Saul tilted back. "Looks like you'd have a good-sized fleet of vessels idle."

Gowdy waved an unappreciative hand. "All this is known to me. What is your plan to evade it?"

Now Saul's chair slammed down. "This is it; there's only one site on the shore there suitable for a

terminal. I want it. The man that owns it is the only man up there that's to be handled in this. As long as he's alive he'll never let go this idea of a railroad. My plan is simply this: to let him think he's getting his railroad—until it's too late."

"How?" Every eye was focused on Saul Budro.

"I want you to find me a man—one whom you can trust and who can keep his mouth shut. I want you to let him come up there as a promoter, to start the terminal operation as a construction company, as though with the approval of the railroad.

"Legère will then, of course, turn over this site to the construction company. It would never strike him to doubt its being a genuine thing." Saul paused. "I've already got a helper up there to take care of young Legère's part, and you can leave the rest to me."

There followed a few moments of potent silence. Then Eleazer Gowdy lifted his head. "I think possibly we might find you such a man. We will consider it."

He rose. The conference was ended.

From his corner young Robertson stared at his senior blankly, as if he had not heard aright. Then he got up hurriedly and passed out. His face was very red.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOUL OF LACASSE

GRACIETTE DORION was coming down the slope from the house of the priest. The grim burden of the secret she was carrying had driven her to Father André in sore distress of soul. The promise to keep this secret had been forced from her. Under such circumstance was one bound to keep that promise?

That was what she had asked the priest. And when he had asked if any would benefit by her speaking out, the thought of how it would affect David—of how it would kill him in his very soul if, as she had begun to feel certain, he was in love with the girl—rose to confront her, and the same old hopelessness was upon her again, and she had come away.

It was well down the road to the village that Graciette stopped suddenly. A man was in the road before her, bowing low, hat in hand. Graciette recognized at once the sharpened face and close-set eyes of the second castaway.

Lacasse put out a detaining hand, as she made to hurry by. "One moment, mamselle. It would be a great kindness if I might speak with you." He was smiling unctuously. "And it is possible you might find my talk of as much importance to you as to me."

Still she shrank away, her face perplexed, disturbed. "It is of M'sieu' David Legère I would speak—of him and *one other*."

Graciette's hand went suddenly up to her bosom.

Her interest, anxiety, was patently visible now—and pathetically intense. "What is it you have to say of him?"

Cesaire's narrow-set eyes were glittering in snaky intentness now; he was gripping into absolute control his entire equipment of wits to concentrate on the game in hand. "Perhaps he is in grave danger, mamselle!"

"What—what do you mean?"

"I mean his happiness, his future"—here Lacasse laid a heavy hand upon his advantage—"perchance even his life itself!" Graciette had gone a little pale at that, and the man added quickly: "It may be in your power to save him all this, mamselle."

"How?"

Cesaire hesitated a second. It was not going to be easy. For him to reveal things in St. Anne's at this stage of the game would mean personal danger to himself from his townsmen as well as from Budro. He glanced down the road furtively.

"What I tell you must be kept sacredly secret from the townspeople, mamselle. Do you promise?"

"Yes." Graciette was trembling at the unexpected turn of things. She knew now what he was going to say.

Cesaire Lacasse plunged. "It has to do with the girl who came to St. Anne's with me, mamselle. We were not castaways."

He could not tell from the girl's face how deeply he had stirred with this. He began swiftly on his picture of what had happened, sketching in Quebec, the Piège des Anguilles, his own part in things—then the well-defined scheme against young Legère—

He stopped abruptly. The girl was not heeding. Her detachment, her complete absorption with the things in her own mind, struck him bewilderingly.

Suddenly Cesaire's jaw fell ajar. "Mamselle," he exclaimed, "*you know!*"

The girl started. Then she moaned. "Oh, yes, I know."

"But, mamselle!" Cesaire's surprise was not unmixed with sheer terror. "How *could* you know?"

"I cannot tell you that. I want only to—to help."

One startled moment and the thing seething within the heart of Lacasse overflowed and poured forth.

"But don't you see, mamselle, that now you *must* take action, before it is too late. I, Cesaire Lacasse, am bound hand and foot. If I speak, without doubt I die. But if you speak! Ah, mamselle—"

It was a sordid spectacle. Lacasse fell into wheedling undulations, almost serpentlike in their vivid intensity of purpose.

"You could say just one word in M'sieu' Legère's ear—just one little word, mamselle; that he is being duped, that his youth and his young man's honor are being made mock of—that—that—"

The man swallowed himself coherent again, although his eyes never left the girl's face. "You love him, mamselle. And you are the only one that knows. Don't you see, it is your duty to save him! Who knows, mamselle—this information may have been intrusted you by God, for just this!"

In sudden inspiration Lacasse recognized the telling value of this argument and pressed it. "Think of it, mamselle! Chosen of God! A divine instrument! How can you hesitate?" He stopped, breathless but deadly intent.

The girl was staring away across the green fields. "Ah, dear God! I—I cannot tell what to do," she breathed wretchedly.

Lacasse was upon her again, wolfishly. There was a sinister streak in the stream of his argument now; it stung and burned, intentionally corroding. "This girl, mamselle—she does not love him. Only the

other night I, myself, heard her say it. She will play with him only. She will get him to sacrifice his all. And she will fling him aside. And the townspeople, too. They, also, will pay dear—think of that, mamselle! If you could but know the things in store for St. Anne's you could not hesitate."

Then, whispering softly, low, as though to the listening depths of her being: "Just a word to him, mamselle—one little word—for the sake of the good God, mamselle!"

The girl roused herself and faced him calmly. "What would you have me do?"

Lacasse leaped now to renewed animation. "You must act quickly. Only just now, down on the shore, I heard her invite him to take her, this very evening—where do you suppose, mamselle? To the Lovers' Islet!

"There is a moon, and it is a place of sorcery, that! Mamselle, listen closely: I know how she is pressed to hurry matters—ah, how sorely! Saul Budro taunts her, always. And so, to-night, she will use every wile upon him, mamselle. And if she once roused him to the things within him—ah, mamselle, then it will be too late, for in his innocence he will be led to do whatever she suggests."

The girl prepared to move on wearily, deeply burdened of the things in her soul. "I will do what I can," she said.

Graciette hurried along home by a short cut across the fields. All her turmoil of soul was stilled now, was overlaid with the imperturbable calmness of fixed resolve—come what might, she was going to tell Legère. He would hate her, but she would have saved him, and Lacasse had shown her there was the future of St. Anne's to consider, also. She would see him at once.

From the dooryard she could see his boat tossing with its fellows out with the fishing fleet. She must

first make ready Felix's supper and get away before he came.

In the little kitchen she made ready the tea and set the table. She snatched at a white cloth and laid it over the food to keep it from drying up. Her hands were shaking now. The overlying ice of her restraint was beginning to give way, after all.

What if she were too late even now? It meant but an instant, sometimes, for one to fall in love. Perhaps, already David was lost. Panic seized her. She caught up a shawl and snatched open the door to—

The doorway was blocked. Felix Dorion entered with fish on a string. "A few salmon came in shore to-day among the herring," he announced levelly. "This one is to be cooked for the supper." He laid it in the sink. "We are to have a guest."

The girl stood staring helplessly. The sudden stemming of the flood of her emotion made her dazed and sick. Instinctively, at the sound of Dorion's voice, she had started to obey—the shawl had come off.

Then things rushed upon her again. She faced him rather wildly. "Supper is—ready," she stammered breathlessly. "I have to—to go out. I—I must go!"

Felix's puzzled eyes took in the table, the cloth over the food. "To be gone some time, evidently," he observed. "Well, as the Americans would say, 'Think yet again,' my dear."

He picked up the soap to wash his hands. "We will have the salmon broiled, if you please, with *sauce piquante*." In the old days Felix knew the way of things epicurean, and it had been his task to train Graciette well. "Our guest swears by thy cooking. I do not wish him disappointed."

Graciette Dorion never forgot the misery of that next hour. An intention to dash out and away, a

veritable flame at first, died laggingly down under Felix's watchfulness.

The smoke from the flaring salmon fat choked, nauseated her. At six o'clock she heard the mellow tones of La Cloche—the bell for the fishermen sounding along the shore. At seven all was ready.

And down out of the lengthening shadows darkening the hillside up back of the house came lurching a bulky, swinging figure. It crossed the yard, and Saul Budro stood grinning in the doorway.

At that same instant, down in the Legère yard, by the shore, Gracielle saw David Legère come out from the house and make for the beach. He was dressed in his best—peerlessly handsome, even at a distance. A coat was over his arm.

Gracielle Dorion glanced once at the two men across the room. She snatched open the door and fled.

Down the yard she ran like a deer. She flew down the slope to the shore and stumbled on down to the beach.

There she stopped short. She was just in time to see a sleek little white power boat, carrying two, sweep out from behind some buildings and make for the open like a streak.

CHAPTER IX

SORCERY

IT was inconceivable—the moon!

It came slowly up out of the tranquil depths like some somber berg of ice, illuminated with inner fires; it floated on the rim of the gray, velvety sea, a vast, gleaming, entralling thing of rose and gold and embers. Slowly, majestically, it took on form and grew in stature. It expanded leisurely upward into a stratum of low-lying clouds, scarce discernible in the dusk. These melted fragments from its margin; they penetrated stealthily across its circumference, half veiling its golden front with irregular dusky bars. It expanded higher yet. And soon it became an eerie, towering, phantom castle, in its half-shrouding clouds; a spectral thing standing far off on the sea, its great, glowing, golden shell wrought into fissures like deep, flame-haunted halls of enchantment.

The moon dominated all the night with its imperious mystery.

A single pin point of land held in the vast, moon-bathed sea. L'Ilôt d'Amour—Lovers' Islet—was the last land out, a mere crumb of earth negligibly dropped from the fashioning of a continent.

In the luminous dusk it showed as a ring of rock; an encircling margin of thick, upstanding marsh grass; in the center an open space of clean, dry sand. The sea, like murky, pulsating velvet, plashed among the crevices with soft lappings; a silvery boat, floating fancifully at the margin of shore, nosed the rocks in tiny caresses.

To sit in the center of the islet was like being lightly afloat on immeasurable space; was like being attached lightly to the circumference of the earth, without being of it. When the moon prevailed, as to-night, it was like being suspended in some dream realm of fantasy, the material world forgot; only glamour and romance and youth and love remaining.

In the center of the sand, now, glowed the blood-red jewel of a tiny fire, offering up a lofty-aspiring thread of incense to the heavens—thin, straight, unwavering in the still, motionless air. And on either side of the fire sat David Legère and the girl.

Legère was feeling strange. He could not have told how. He had started away from the shore with his body thrilling somehow to a tremendous restless disturbance. It was an odd thing; bodily activity did not ease it, and yet it was not entirely of the mind.

Seeking driftwood for the tiny fire, he had wondered again at it. It seemed as though something within him was wrought up to an excited expectancy, involving every fiber of his body, every region of his mind. Some great thing was to happen to him, some great change in his life. That seemed to be the trend of it all.

And the girl? The girl had begun by being frightened. Alone with the man on this speck of the world, with every distracting element removed, subject wholly and completely to his presence, she was keenly conscious of his inner disturbance and the depth of it, the alarming extent of it—the man's very ignorance of its meaning frightened her.

It was not that she was frightened of Legère or what he might do—with keen feminine intuition she knew always that she would have nothing to fear from that source, ever; but she was afraid of the profound things she herself had stirred in a nature of such tremendous depths as his.

With sudden, overwhelming shame, she saw herself a trifler with one of God's finest achievements. And, following that, she felt again the faint stirrings of compassion within her. For days she had known it to be there, and only waiting her recognition of it to flood her with a great, confusing pity and tenderness.

She jerked herself erect. Softness, now, would never do. She deliberately steeled herself. She summoned before her eyes the face of Cesaire Lacaſſe in all its crafty repellence.

To-night her part in things was to reach culmination. And, at best, it was going to be terribly difficult. She still clung to the hope of getting Legère away from St. Anne's.

Saul Budro had come back from his trip down coast radiating unholy satisfaction. His plan had worked. Already was the stage set for her to proceed. And if she could not succeed in getting Legère to leave St. Anne's, why then she must——

Her eyes sought the moon. It was emerging opulently from its cloying veils.

And already Legère was giving her her first cue. "You said once, mamselle, that some time you—you would tell me of—of the world that I have never seen."

He laughed a little, confused laugh, and shook himself to relieve things. "I think the moon must have got into my brain. I seem to be craving—something; something to make me—see vividly; to make me think vigorously—some strong food for my mind."

The girl glanced about with swift appraisal. The sea of murky sable was their entire world. She lifted a deliberate hand. "The sea stretches away so far, my friend, does it not? One cannot but be moved to ponder on all that it covers of the earth; one cannot but think of all the different peoples it

brings together and yet keeps apart; of all the strange countries the sea about this very islet sweeps away to visit; of the strange customs, the strange ways of living life."

Her eyes were becoming wide and deep at the grip of her *own* reflections. "It is so wonderful—the world!" she went on. "The desert lands, the lands of wondrous beauty, the places where history has dwelt and flourished—the great marts of the world where men assemble together the things provided by the good God!"

She was swept out of herself. The eternal yearning of her *own* mind, stimulated by the things opened up by her convent life, were all upon her in vivid authority.

"Tell me," came low across the fire.

The girl gathered herself. Then she launched forth. Here was an imagination vitally alive.

It was a marvelous world she evoked for the man opposite, staring, motionless, into the blood-red jewel of embers. The moon now had laid down upon the sable velvet of waters a broad roadway of alluring gold; the girl followed along it with the eyes of her mind, and back to the tiny islet she brought a gorgeous, living picture of the tropics.

Unfolding before the man's eyes were reefs and lagoons of varied coral, in a shimmering sapphire sea, and islands—emerald and jade, matted with the strange dense foliage of the jungle, and topped with towering palms. And, glancing along above the silver sands, in and out of the tangled jungle, flashed birds like veritable flying jewels of blue and yellow and crimson and white. Natives were there, in crudest life of all the earth—crudest faiths and crudest customs. And Legère saw it all.

The girl paused.

The moon was now a great, gleaming platen of gold. It stirred the blood with its burned grandeur.

And now the girl's imagination leaped to the very opposite of the luxuriant world she had been painting so vividly, and before the staring eyes of the man grew—the desert. She gave herself free rein, and she had read much.

On the subtle tongue of the girl strange Orient wastes, in boundless parched solitude drew nigh to the tiny islet. Caravans like strings of beads wound on through trackless sands; and mounted men like flying devils flashed across the glittering reaches. There came the lure of mysterious, narrow streets at night; then—the girl ventured daringly—down in hidden underground holes maidens danced, danced to throbbing, thudding tom-toms and shrill, squealing pipes that squirmed almost unbearably along the trail of the senses.

In his overwrought excitement, the young man across the fire vaulted far beyond the mere words and gestures of his companion. His own fired mind supplied realistic warmth, color, movement—in a veritable orgy of abandon that sent little jolts of supreme ecstasy clicking along his spine in a pleasurable snapping of tiny electric sparks.

He looked up at length, in a pause. His face was the face of a man drunken with dreams. But before he could speak she embarked again. She was following a definite plan, now—she intended that the trend of things should be in her own hands.

"There are the marvels created of mankind," she went on, intentionally matter-of-fact now. "What would you think to behold racing cars that eat up space with the speed of the wind; to see the marvel of submarine craft that sink deep, and slip unseen through the depths of the sea; the planes that shoot like great birds through the sky; the boats, too, that fly!"

The thrall of dreams was passing from Legère's eyes, and nimbly she switched his mind to a new

tack with: "In all these things of creating, you should have a part—you, with your great, wonderful man's body, your clear control of men, your fearlessness at life! It is as I have told you. It is your duty to first know the world."

She stopped dead. Then, low in the stillness: "Why not go? See? Live?"

It brought him reluctantly back from the world of visions. He closed his eyes a moment, and then—became David Legère. "No, mamselle, I have thought it out. I cannot leave St. Anne's. I cannot break my vow to God."

She met the calm, immovable world builder in his eyes and experienced a little sick feeling of swift helplessness, hopelessness—as before a mountain that must be moved. She erased it swiftly.

"Why not?" she countered. "Is St. Anne's, then, of more importance than the world?"

"To me, yes."

"But you do not know! Think how much better fitted you would be——"

"I only know that I have set myself to win. And never yet have I let myself fail."

He was aggressor, now. With a little feeling of dismay the girl felt control of things taken firmly out of her hands.

"When a man lets himself fail in anything he sets his heart upon, he is self-beaten already for the next thing he attempts. I shall not fail in what I have planned for St. Anne's."

In the fervor of his feeling his halting speech was gone; he spoke easily, with the unconscious fluency of a man expressing that which was part of him.

The girl's heart sank dead within her. She knew now how strongly she had hoped to win her own cause without doing harm to this man.

Harm to him? She felt like fighting *for* him. The thought struck her forcibly; she was amazed at

the bitter struggle she would be willing to make to prevent him from suffering. He had been so fine, so splendid, in his clean faith and trustfulness—so kindly to her—so thoughtfully worshipful. Here, her feelings grew rather poignant—no one had been *kind* to her, ever; and his kindness had been so utterly sweet.

Her hands were cold. The heaviness in her heart was dragging her down. She pulled herself together. There was nothing to do but go on, now. They would only get him with this devilish new scheme, but—at least she might be able to temper some of its workings.

She raised her head and spoke, quietly, resignedly. “What is your next plan?” She knew so well what he would answer.

“The railroad.”

“That seems not so difficult—now.”

“The officials want to be sure about the site,” he replied; “that it will hold up a pier and coal pocket without too costly construction. They want to be shown.”

She tried to throw some spirit into her counsel. “I have heard it all talked over many times in the village,” she said. “Why not build the terminal construction yourselves, and well to the railroad. Have you not heard?

“But to-day they say a man landed to look over the ground; they say that he has been in conferences with the railroad people. See him! Talk to him! It is the way such things are done! You and the men here can help form such a company!”

It was done. The girl was panting with the effort, and she was weary and sick at soul.

He responded slowly. “I have heard about him. I do not know much about such things.” His face was lighting to a strange glow. “But now that *you* say it is the thing to be done,” the strange thrill of

his being was coming back, "I am going to consider it."

His eyes burned fervently on her from the stirred depths within him. "You are wonderful, mamselle! All these things of the world—of life—you know so well! Will you—will you be willing to—to still help me?"

It seemed now her heart was transfixed with a sharp stabbing pain. She forced her eyes away from his. The moon now was a staring thing of white-hot brass—it searched out every pebble remorselessly. It seemed to search out every last little blemish on her soul.

"Not for long, *mon ami*." She was becoming unstrung. Tears gushed on her lids. "I will be going away—soon—now."

He gasped at a swift breath. Then, slowly: "Going away?" It came hushed as in awe, as something the mind could not grasp.

She rose to turn back. The man also was on his feet, staring. He was like a man stunned. Then:

"But—but—mamselle—you cannot go—you—" A great hollow cry burst from him. "God! I—I can't stay here, then!"

Her head came up. She wheeled. Some great illumination was transforming the girl. Her tear-stained face, turned to his, flamed radiantly in the moonlight. She held out a shaking little hand.

"When all is done, my David, will you go—with me?" It was the glorious solution of—of everything.

He stared at her half seeing, dazed by the sweep of things being loosed within him—mighty, uprising things, breaking free like the legions of an army that carried all before it. There was a fierce movement and the girl was on his breast, like a child.

The man was scarce knowing what he did. The uprising within him was mounting as on the strains of mighty martial music—a wild, rapturous music

that made him drunk and dizzy—the wild victorious song of his awakened manhood. And now he was running with her, along the sands—madly, unwittingly, in the moonlight.

And the girl was sobbing gustily, and clinging to him as if she would bury herself deep in the new world of his tenderness. It had swept in upon her as from the four corners of the universe. And there was no more withstanding it than withstanding mighty rushing winds.

Love! The girl had known no more the way of love than had the man himself. All her early years her life had witnessed the eternal game of the female attracting the male. But love? This all-engrossing tenderness of the soul?

Legère came to at the margin of the tide. He set her down lightly in the boat, and tucked his coat about her. There was a new manner to his bearing as he unshipped the painter and stepped in. Fulfillment had crowned him.

The girl lay stilled, in dazed rapture. She had bent her every wile to victory, and by some strange sorcery she had been ensnared herself.

The engine sent a soft tattoo of rapid purring abroad over the sea. Upon the velvet surface they wove a glittering trail of silver in the moonlight.

CHAPTER X

THE CROSSROADS OF DECISION

TO Justine Ducharme the world had changed over-night. From hardness, antagonism and bitter unrest, she seemed caught up breathlessly into a realm of promise, and love, and tenderness—tenderness that drove her now to fight *for* Legère, and not against him.

In grilling concentration, she attacked the situation. She must still appear to be carrying out her original plans. But she would get Legère away before the actual dénouement, and once out in the world, she hoped then that he would never learn of all the confusion he had left behind.

Secretly, that morning she managed a little talk with Budro. Plainly and briefly he told her the movements planned for the day. The man from down coast was to feel out Legère that very afternoon, was to put up to him the ultimatum as to the Golden Hope. She won Budro's admiration by saying she would be ready to follow up the man's opening attack herself.

All through the village was a stirring excitement. The arrival of the stranger from down coast to look over shore sites was the sole engrossing interest.

In the afternoon speculation became rampant. The stranger was in close conversation with David Legère. One could see them plainly over on the Legère beach. But also one could by no subterfuge get near enough to overhear, which was to be deplored.

The stranger had followed Legère along home

from the village, halting him in the yard. He smiled ingratiatingly. "Are you young Legère?" he asked with careless familiarity.

"Yes, m'sieu'." Legère regarded him quietly.

"I've heard of you," the man began. "In fact, I've heard more of you lately than any man on this coast." He smiled with easy flattery.

The young man's eyes were still unmoved in their calm scrutiny. His might have been the courteous demeanor of a great Newfoundland dog toward a playfully disposed inferior. The stranger began again and his speech now held no tinge of lightness or familiarity.

"I've come to St. Anne's on a rather important errand. It seems the most of it has to do with you. Will you talk with me a bit?"

Legère's gentle courtesy rose to the surface. "With pleasure, m'sieu'. Will you come into the house?"

"No. We can talk better out here. Thanks just the same." He hesitated, as though feeling for the proper attack and plunged boldly into his subject. "It seems St. Anne's is a place of big possibilities. If they could be properly developed this port might become a notable seaport for much of this part of Canada. It has the locational advantages, and the natural resources.

"The one needful thing seems to be a railroad to get the canning and manufacturing supplies in, and the natural products out. I have been sent here to look over the ground. The railroad will run down here, but first they must be assured of a fit site.

"I am representing a development company that is willing to build a terminal construction here and show the railroad. How far can I count on your help?"

He had watched almost with a feeling of awe the living interest that grew vividly in the boy's eyes.

Now his own eyes were wide and bright with excitement of the game in hand. Legère was speaking:

"You can count on everything I have to put into it." It was simply said, but the voice thrilled deep.

"All right! Fine! Now listen: If we get into this it simply means we're in to win—get me?" He transfixed the other with the sharp intensity of his gaze.

"Of course, m'sieu'."

"I mean by that that we simply can't afford to take chances—not even the slightest. Now I've been all over this shore looking for that site. The coast wall both north and south of this place is out of the question for miles. This harbor is the only logical terminal point.

"The sand bottoms here are all right for spawning grounds, but mighty ticklish bottoms for railroad construction without costing a fortune. One of your northeasters here would be liable to make kindling wood of it." His voice took on an impressive gravity; he was following Saul Budro's coaching, word for word. "There's only one spot I can see that answers all requirements, and that is——"

He stopped dead. His hand came up slowly and he pointed. "That site over there!"

The boy's face blanched as he followed. "You—you don't mean the—the Golden Hope?"

"I mean that point where the fish weir stands."

In a moment the boy recovered himself. "But, m'sieu', *that* bottom is not so good as this where we are, for example. It is out toward the sea so far as to get the full force of all the biggest storms!" Legère's face showed his terrible concern.

"It is the only place! That channel through the rocks is ideal anchorage for much of it." He gestured, in absolute finality. "I tell you I've been all

over it. It's there or nowhere, so far as we're concerned."

Legère turned to look appealingly out toward the weir that had meant so much. The tide seemed to lap in caressingly; a little flurry of mackerel gulls shifted on and off its poles, or drove straight down after its venturesome herring already swarming within. He shook his head.

"It was that weir that started it all," he said solemnly. "Oh, I can't let the Golden Hope go!"

The man's voice was running rapidly now, on a tense, level tone, hypnotizing in its swift volubility. "This morning I talked with the priest of this place. Its future means a great deal to him. He thinks a great deal of you—no man not his own son could hold his love more securely. He said you would do what was right." A potent pause. "And this is right. Think: A swift-growing town, schools, banks, shipping! Success and prosperity beyond all points on this coast. Eventually a city of prominence—a place to make distinctive the business life of all this part of Canada! And all up to one man! You!"

Silence. Legère was standing like a statue, his face out over the water, the striving of his soul showing in his face.

Again the voice came stealing about his ears. "And Pierre Legère—the history of this section would hang entirely upon the name of Pierre Legère, as was intended in—"

"Please don't m'sieu'!" Legère had wheeled. "I cannot tell you how I—I—am all stirred within, m'sieu'. I want time to think."

They faced each other a single moment, and suddenly Legère bowed low. "Au revoir, m'sieu'! I will talk to you again."

The man knew how to plead a cause. He also knew how to leave off. "I shall be waiting," he said. He turned, and was gone.

For a long time David Legère stood as the man had left him. Then slowly, abstractedly, in fierce bafflement of spirit, he turned and climbed the slope to the *calvaire*, sat down heavily beneath the cross and stared straight out to sea.

It was unexpected, the turn things had taken. He was overwhelmed with a feeling of helplessness. The Golden Hope was somehow the visible manifestation of the creating spirit that lived within him; and it was successful—it had worked. This one achievement was the first-born of a man's soul.

In his deep abstraction, he suddenly became conscious that a change had crept into the loneliness of the *calvaire*. He stirred curiously—his heart was beginning to speed strangely. And then—a little white hand reached downward and touched his shoulder, and the girl Justine sat down on the rocks beside him.

A moment and, as though with instant understanding, the girl laid a soft hand upon his own and pressed it firmly. The young man responded with all his being to the implied sympathy. He clutched the hand in both his own as if thrilled all through at its contact. Then, still staring at the sea, he said: "It is very hard at times—this thing of life."

The girl's other hand was patting his. Her eyes were fixed on his profile as if devouring fiercely every line of the powerful, clean-cut features. "Tell me," she said softly.

"I suppose it is a plan of the good God—to sometimes leave us at the crossroads of two branching decisions, and there let us make use of the wisdom we have learned, and choose unaided of Him. And it seems always that these are the times of life of greatest importance. And they come to each and every man, and, as he decides, so may it make or break him."

As usual when wholly unconscious of himself he

spoke readily and freely, and the girl was moved at the profound depth of his thought.

"What is it that is troubling you?" Her heart was laboring heavily. She knew without his telling her.

His answer came with characteristic man's brevity. "They want the Golden Hope site—for the railroad."

A tense silence, then: "Does that mean so much, then?"

"I did not know before how much."

"Are there not other sites for a weir?"

A sudden warmth grew in the girl's tone, as if the thought offered something of comfort for her. "And the fish—certainly they will always be here."

"That is true. But it was not that. The Golden Hope seemed—— Oh, I cannot tell you, mamselle. It seemed almost a part of me. Any other such will not be the same. It is like one's first-born."

His eyes were far out, searching the inscrutable blue depths of the sea. "There must be some other way—I don't see how I can let the Golden Hope go."

There came a tightening of the girl's forces—that, and a great sadness. Then: "Would thy father have said that?" Almost she could sense herself how the thought gripped him. "Thy father gave his very life for his dream. All the people in this place speak of him with reverence. Was he a greater man than his son?"

A single moment and he turned to her, his face clear and clean of its deep perplexity. "You are right, mamselle," he said. "And I thank you. It is quite wonderful for me to have a counselor such as you."

A single hot gush of compassionate tears threatened the girl's eyes and she turned away. His swift yielding, his childlike trust and simplicity, made her long to take him protectingly in her arms, to hold

him tight, to croon over him, to keep intrigue of the world far away from him.

She looked out upon the sea, her face averted, and said low, and vibrant with feeling: "May the good God let me guide thee aright!"

Slowly he took her arms, turned her body around to his, and, his hands crushing her flesh with fierce unguessed power, he kissed her on the lips. He held her off and gazed into her white face and eyes that straightway closed before the somber things in his own, and he gasped out hoarsely: "God—what it is to love!"

That night a somewhat determined Mme. Flavie Boudreau arrived to take supper with the Widow Saulnier. And over the teacups the widow's lodger took occasion to mention that she hoped now to depart for the States very soon.

CHAPTER XI

COILS OF RETRIBUTION

THAT night a meeting was held up in Saul Budro's cabin. The fog was in. It filled the harbor of St. Anne's with a deep impenetrable murk. For the purpose of secrecy the night was ideal.

Saul received his visitors in obvious satisfaction. There was the man Desmond from down shore, who came up the slope as soon as the fog came in; there was the little manager of the Gowdy, Doan & Robertson store, Alpheus Wiggin, who had spent an arduous half hour tacking and doubling on what he hoped would be a secret course around the cove, and who finally scratched a summons on Saul's door, precociously nervous and out of breath; there was the girl—white-faced, still, inscrutable; and Lacasse prowling back and forth in the shadows like a lynx.

And then, last of all, came Felix Dorion, alcoholically debonair and gracious. He had a packet of papers under his arm. From his easy manner he might have been summoned to officiate at a marriage.

The night was chill. Saul kicked the logs of the fire together, lit his pipe with a coal and started things.

"Legère is willing to let his weir site go"—a grimly whimsical light spread over Saul's face—"for the glory of St. Anne's. He understands that a development concern is going to organize a construction company to build a terminal pier that they can later turn over to the railroad."

Saul spat musingly into the fire. "I guess what Legère *don't* know about such things will make it pretty easy—but that plan sounds about as plausible as any." A moment, then: "We're here to form that construction company."

The man Desmond spoke from the other side of the fire. "It's going to take a considerable sum to construct that canal laying out as *you* figure—probably more than you are prepared to raise."

"No, it ain't," observed Saul comfortably. "No it ain't."

"Perhaps you know," returned Desmond. "But to run up construction of that sort up here in this country is no small job. You've got to get out real timber with men that know about it; you've got to get a real construction man to put it up for you, and you've got to get a bunch of laborers that know this kind of work. I doubt if you've got more than a simple carpenter in this entire town."

"It's out-of-town help I want," replied Saul, deliberating. "They won't be interested in anything but their job, and won't want to be."

The man Desmond gazed at him a moment in silence. "All right. Now about the costs. You offered young Legère five thousand dollars once for the site, and probably he will expect that much now."

Budro nodded. "He can have it."

"And as near as I can figure, it will take something like twenty thousand and more for the sort of construction you plan, without the buildings. There's a lot of blasting and changes necessary, and it may run up considerably more even than that." He stopped a moment, and added: "Even then I'm not sure of that bottom where the weir is."

"I'll risk it for what I want." Budro nodded, complacent still.

Alpheus Wiggin introduced a remark upon a pre-

liminary cough. "I—I would wish first to have the figures touching on this matter. I—I am not prepared to say definitely that—that my principals would be interested beyond a certain, say, nominal sum."

Budro looked at him—straight, level, quiet. "Your principals, as you call 'em, will do just as I say, my good little chap." Saul's eyes narrowed. "The boss of your outfit seems to be a business man. He's got more at stake here than any one.

"So you needn't be thinking to start any haggling, for I might's well remark right here that I'm goin' to knock 'em down for something handsome, my little man."

Budro's manner, as he finished, was no longer easy, nor careless. He swept the gathering with a keen look.

"Listen, all of you. This is how I'm goin' to work, and you've all got something to do. I can pay for all this myself, but I won't. This is going to be a regular corporation under government laws.

"I'm going to hold fifty-one per cent of the stock, of course. For that I'm going to pay the five thousand dollars I was willing to give Legère. The balance I pay for in brains." He slued round to the little man Wiggin almost vehemently. "Your outfit is going to put up half the balance, no matter how much it takes."

"And the rest?" Desmond asked quickly.

Saul Budro's face might have been a sinister mask. "This is where the rest is coming from," he said. "Young Legère is going to put back his five thousand for stock, and with it all the other ready money he's saved from the *weir*."

A half-stifled exclamation had come from the background. The girl was staring at Budro, white and fascinated as by something of strange terror. Her hand was clutching her throat.

"What's the matter?" growled the big spokesman.

Swiftly the girl moved her features into the semblance of a smile—a tragic subterfuge. She bowed her head in simulated humility. "It is wonderful—your clever brain, monsieur. I salute you!"

Budro's eyes had already left her face. He was launching his ultimatum.

"For the rest we'll have Legère interest all these crazy Frenchmen townspeople of his. They've always been so damned proud of the name of Legère, and so damned ready to follow the lead of this one, that there's many a snug little hoard of savings they'll be ready to turn into this scheme on his say-so. And he'll say so, when he understands it—right."

Budro got to his feet. He was palpably, now, in the grip of big things. He wheeled on the suave Felix Dorion, staring up at him with smiling, appreciative eyes.

"Dorion, I want you to have ready the deeds and grants of the Legère place and get him to do the trick. Then have the stock certificates ready for sale, and yourself ready to sell them."

He wheeled to tower over the seared-looking Wiggin. "You advise your people what I've told you tonight. I don't care whose name the shares stand in." He faced the white-faced girl. "And you——"

She was staring up at him fascinatedly. Already she felt herself gripped tight in coils of retribution like the deadly, tightening coils of a snake.

Budro pointed at her a heavy finger. "Legère's your job! Look to it that he sees this thing—right! And don't forget to show him just how much it all means for the glory of St. Anne's! Glory!" Saul Budro threw back his bearded chin and laughed stertorously up into the rafters.

There was a nervous stirring of chairs as the gathering broke up. There was little tarrying, with

the exception of the suave Felix, who waited a bit to ask briefly about certain details. And then——

Out from the shadows a haggard figure shuffled into the firelight. Lacasse's face had grown gaunt with the ravages of his inner fires. He had had no opportunity to see again the daughter of Dorion. Since the night of the last attempt her father had kept her a prisoner—of fear. And his anxiety was gnawing at his vitals with the unceasing hunger of famished wolf cubs.

"M'sieu', listen to me." There was that almost of dignity in the poignancy of his misery. "You have asked too much of me! I—I cannot bear it, to stand by and watch."

Lacasse was nibbling at his finger tips frenziedly. His face had a wild-animal look—a wild animal that had been caged up and starved. "I—I warn you, m'sieu', I cannot bear it. Give me the money I spent upon Justine, and let me go!"

Budro pointed swiftly to the still open door. He was in no mood for trivialities in soul. "Get out!" he growled.

CHAPTER XII

DOVE AND EAGLE

GRACIETTE DORION was suffering daily, suffering with an exquisite torture of soul that was confusing the very trend of her reason. Since the night she had fled from Felix's little dinner, she had not appeared out.

In any case, she felt anything she might do would be too late. Old Barbe had kept her posted on the gossip of the village, and the whole talk was David's complete adoration of the girl.

And Lacasse had found her again. He had come stealthily to the house. He seemed a pitiable creature, gnawing constantly at his finger tips. His narrowed beads of eyes chilled her with their blue incandescence.

She pitied him so. It was the day after the last meeting at Budro's. And, half mad, he told her the plan in detail. "Tell him, mamselle!" he pleaded beseechingly. "For the love of God, tell Legère! Save him, and me, and us all!"

And now, on Sunday, at Mass, she found herself suddenly filled with the simple conviction that, no matter what the outcome, she should tell all to Legère. There followed a flood of things to strengthen it. First, it was inconceivable to let him go on nurturing things in his own heart that might undo his very soul later; second, if he was to hate her, Graciette, for telling him, he would hate her more for not telling him.

Graciette hurried out from church as soon as Mass was said, and a little later, from her concealment

among the spruces at the side of the road, she saw Legère coming. Stepping forth before him, Gracielle might have been some gentle little wood dove intercepting the majestic progress of an eagle. But her heart was driving the blood through her body so fiercely that it seemed her veins would burst.

"David," she finally managed, "I must talk with you. There are—there are things that I must say to you."

"Yes, Gracielle. I—I will be glad to talk to-day." He gazed about at the glory of full summer maturity about him. "There—there is so much of joy in it."

They passed over a stile up to the pasture land back of the village. A great birch tree, hoary and lichen-covered, lay prone along the edge of the woods, and they sat upon it.

For a moment there was silence. And, strangely, the man was the first to break it. Evidently David's mind was not fixed upon Gracielle or her errand with him, for he said: "It is wonderful how the world changes with one's happiness, Gracielle! To-day, for instance, with the sun on the sea, with the green woods, and the fields—it all seems that St. Anne's is the most beautiful spot the world can hold."

"Are you—are you very happy then?" Gracielle knew a great sinking at her heart.

David picked up a couple of stones and passed them through his hands idly. "I don't believe I can tell you *how* happy, Gracielle; but I am going to try."

"David," she cried out suddenly, "don't! There is something, first, that I must tell *you!*" She choked, wildly, for a starting point. "Oh, David, you've been so good, so splendid to me, always! Ever since I was a little thing and you but a little boy, before—before we came to know each other

well—it seems you were about the only one to show me kindness, and I—I have always——”

She stopped pitifully in her distress. She was going to say: “I have always loved you for it.” But they were children then; and now they were man and maid, and she could not trust herself into the domain of his love.

She gripped herself desperately and said, instead: “I have always been so grateful, David, and always have I tried to help you——”

She broke off again, suddenly, before a great cold thought. All her life she had meant nothing in the way of help; now she could help him at last—by torturing him.

He was smiling abstractedly; not yet was he detached from the glamour of his own thoughts. “You *have* helped, Gracielle. I have told you before.”

She rallied herself. “David, I must tell you things, and in telling I—I must hurt you; oh, hurt you so!”

“Oh, you can’t, Gracielle!” He was patting her hand in a sudden outburst of his happy mood. “You don’t know how to hurt any one, *p’tite*. And I”—he raised his face and shook his head reverently—“I can’t be hurt.”

He stopped her despairing little outcry. “Wait, Gracielle, before telling thy terrible little news. I am going to talk to thee—talk to thee frankly—the little playmate of my life!” He stopped a moment, smiling raptly. “A great happiness has come to me, Gracielle—a happiness that sometimes awes me; in it I seem to have come close unto *le bon Dieu* himself. I have found—*love*.”

The girl fought to gather herself—to speak. She felt that every word of his was only making her own part harder, but some strange thing in her wanted to scourge itself by hearing him speak of

his love—wanted to know the manner, the breadth, the depth of it. "Oh, David—wait! Let me speak!"

He pressed her back with his arm. "First let me tell you of love, Gracielle. Some time you will know of it yourself." He was not looking—could not see the blinding tears that sprang swift, and seared a course down her cheeks. "It is so wonderful in what it has done to me, and to the world, and to—God himself!

"To me it has given strength, Gracielle, like the giants of old; strength of body, and strength of spirit. It seems almost as if I could conquer the whole earth, and be glad—glad doing it!"

"It has made me see the truth in all things created—which means the love that must precede all life; and it has made me see the beauty in all things created—the beauty lent by love."

A great fear was creeping over the girl now, a great awed fear of the grim power that she held in her hands. He was speaking on, but her voice was interrupting, little, and quivering, and very far away: "What if love should be taken away from you?" It was inconceivable that in a few words it was given her to wreck and despoil a wonderful and grateful creation of God.

He pondered this, lost in a mental effort, as if groping in a fog. Now he was shaking his head in calm conviction. "No. It could not be taken from me, Gracielle."

"But if it could?" The girl's soul was one great awed questioning.

"Nothing could take it, Gracielle."

"But God—" Her eyes were swimming; her chin was quivering with the misery of it all.

"God would not do it!"

"But if he should?"

There was dead silence, the man's body seemed

to stiffen to rigidity with the grimness of his thought. "Then would I hate God, Gracielle!"

"Oh-h!" She was utterly shattered with the violence of her fear. Instinctively her nerveless arm passed through the sign of the cross. And then, swiftly, her icy resolve to tell him sprang to water within her, and dribbled out from her heart in a veritable flood of tears.

She rocked in her anguish. To hate God was to die. Her love for Legère sealed her lips beyond any further venturing. The old turmoil was hers again, increased a hundredfold.

Legère was brought out of himself now, and helpless in his confused distress at her tears. "Don't, Gracielle," he stammered awkwardly. "Oh—don't!"

Suddenly he was a boy again, a sturdy, unthinking, protecting boy. He put his arm about her and held her tight. "Little Gracielle!" he murmured soothingly. "Dear little Gracielle!"

The tears subsided into a saddened stillness. His tenderness was a lotion that scalped as it soothed.

CHAPTER XIII

THE JUNIOR PARTNER

ST. ANNE'S reacted to the first signs of actual operation with a galvanic promptness. From the first moment that the man Desmond from down shore appeared on the rocks of the Golden Hope, laying off distances with a long steel tape, from the first moment it was known that actual construction was to be begun, history began to function swiftly for St. Anne's.

David Legère had sold the weir site. He admitted it himself. He hoped to have other weirs up and at least one cannery ready to take fish by the next spring.

Vivat! It was to make wild—the excited anticipation! Some one, somehow—it was not very clear—was to build a terminal wharf that was eventually to hold a coal pocket for the railroad, which was to give the railroad's venture an added interest from the start.

Within the next few days the wonder and the excitement grew. A crew of woodsmen landed one day—a husky, polyglot lot, and on the heels of these came other arrivals, men of different caliber, as was easy to be seen, evidently gang bosses and foremen builders.

And soon—no one knew how it started, but it was a fact told by every one, that a big lot of money was to be made on this first deal. The construction was only going to cost a trifling sum, and the railroad was to take it over for—oh, a fortune in gold! And, too, one might invest—any one, in fact, who had a hundred dollars or more; and many had much more.

Later it was said that David Legère himself had put back into the deal all his weir purchase money, and all he had saved besides. Some one asked him. He said it was true. Then he came among them and told them they might do the same; it would help St. Anne's to appear on maps, in the way of renown and glory.

Père André said the same. Glory, indeed! *Vive la gloire!* The fishermen went crazy. Such opportunity to double one's money was never known.

One day, among other strangers, young Robertson of the Halifax office of Gowdy, Doan & Robertson came ashore at St. Anne's. Tod Robertson had been covering the coast, learning fish at first hand. He attracted much attention even for this time of constant strangers.

No one had seen such marvel of a suit of clothes—modest in color, yes, but lining out a man's figure so happily to the eyes; no one had ever seen such a greatcoat as he wore, or such shoes and linen. Ah, wonderful!

Tamant Boudreau, standing in Narcisse Comeau's doorway, said disconcertingly that every one up in Quebec, and Montreal, too, for that matter, dressed so; but no one believed Tamant. And the young man himself—such a good-looking young chap—with a keen, well-disposed face, as though he knew all the secrets of the world, and yet laughed much.

The object of their admiration walked all along through the village and finally over to the site of the construction. He stood watching intently.

The whole place was a jumbled litter of logs, and ballast work, of gear and men. The promoter, Desmond, passed him, but there was no sign of recognition between them.

He stepped down from the streets and moved back along the shore. An old man was down the beach

loading kelp into a little two-wheeled cart, to put on his field. Robertson spoke to him.

The old man raised rheumy eyes and shook his head. "No English, m'sieu'!" he said apologetically.

The young man smiled in swift appreciation. "All right, old top, I forgot." Then: *Monsieur Legère —vous le connaissez?*"

"*Oui, m'sieu'.*" The old habitant brightened respectfully at the crisp, perfectly-enunciated French of the high-world. "If m'sieu' pleases, M'sieu' Legère is coming out there."

He pointed out to a swift little white motor boat making into the harbor. He beamed toothlessly. "A big man, Legère, m'sieu'. Big in body and big in heart." He looked up and said naïvely. "He is going to make us all rich!"

The young man stared. "*Comment?*" he inquired.

"How?" grinned the old relic. "You see, m'sieu', it is like this: We are to have a railroad here in St. Anne's! So grand it will seem, m'sieu'! Most of us have never seen one. And M'sieu' David Legère has given the land where his big new weir was, and put in all his own money, and got them to permit us all to put in our savings so that we, too, may get rich!" The old man's eyes sparkled happily. "You see, m'sieu'. Is it not simple, *hein?*?"

A slow frown of incredulity had come to furrow Robertson's forehead. "Are you telling me truly, my friend?"

"Oh, yes, m'sieu'. Ask any one." He wagged his wretched old head contentedly. "I, Jean Corteau, and my old wife Margrette, we both are to be rich! We had saved twenty louis d'or, m'sieu'! We put it all in! It is a lot of money!"

"God!" the young man grunted in English. "What a rotten, *rotten* frame-up!" Then, hurriedly, in French again: "Good-by, my friend! May all your

dreams come true!" He moved hurriedly along the beach.

Tod Robertson's partnership in the firm of Gowdy, Doan & Robertson had been a recent inheritance from his father. He knew little of the business other than that the concern always had stood high and notable among the big-business names of the Maritime Provinces.

It had always maintained *his* branch of the Robertson family in comfortable luxury, had given him his years at college in the States, and perhaps just a trifle too much ease. But he couldn't be Dave Robertson's son and not have in him somewhere the elements of integrity and progress, and, since he had entered the business, it was this very matter of progress that had been bothering him.

His very first sizing up of the concern had shown him that there *was* no progress, as he knew progress. The business was prosperous, but conducted on the same iron-handed working plan as thirty years ago.

There was nothing of the gladness of modern reciprocity in business in it anywhere. But he could do nothing. He was only a junior and kept in ignorance at that; for instance, since the visit of Budro to the Halifax office, he had been told nothing more.

"Holy cat!" he murmured fervently in growing appreciation. "Something's going to crack up on this coast before long, and if the truth ever gets out, Gowdy, Doan & Robertson wants to be prepared to step high, wide and handsome!"

He became intent on a figure ahead of him. David Legère was swinging along homeward, his splendid carriage magnetic in its appeal.

Tod bowed instinctively when Legère, passing, touched his cap. He turned and stood following

him with his eyes. Suddenly his body stiffened to rigid attention; his blue eyes went slowly black.

A bit ahead a grim little tragedy was being juggedled into ineffectuality by the great young fisherman. Along in the vicinity of the new construction, a young woman had been advancing to meet him when something happened. There had come a dull sodden snap, and a parted cable writhed sharply up into the air like a lightning snake.

Slowly, with terrible deliberation, an auxiliary derrick pole and its tangle of gear began to fall—fall—directly in the direction of the paralyzed girl.

Robertson saw Legère leap forward like a great cat. In its deliberate fall the ponderous pole was uprooting from the muck with a moist sucking. Well up toward its base Legère received it on his upraised hands, and like lightning ran along its length to ease its fall.

He stopped and braced himself. His stalwart figure bent like a tree in the wind; his feet slithered and plowed through the wet sand of the flats, but the man clung like a tiger an easing second, and leaped clear.

The girl was down. Legère sprang to her and picked her up like a little child. Clutching her to him he strode up the beach toward the house. The girl in his arms was unhurt, and in a moment Legère was out on the doorstep again, breathing hard, his eyes still deep with their agony of concern.

Robertson stepped forward with outstretched hand. "I'd like to shake hands with you, my friend." There was lightness in his manner, but he was gravely earnest. "You're a real man," he added.

The tangle of grave things flowed out from Legère's eyes. Something sprang alive in his breast and swept over him warmly. Eye was meeting eye openly—frankly. They liked each other, and each was knowing it.

Legère spoke. "But I was quite frightened, m'sieu'."

"I know, but not for yourself."

A little frown had come on Legère's face as he looked across at the construction work. "But that bottom over there must be muck below, after all, else it would not let that pole down so easy." He turned, and touched his cap with the unerring courtesy of the habitant. "Au revoir, m'sieu'. I must look into it."

Robertson scarce heard. He was watching the other with a mixed feeling of great admiration and great compassion.

The future was to play them much together—these two.

CHAPTER XIV

TOD MEETS FATE

IN the dramatic sweep of things gaining momentum in St. Anne's, the day came when Tod Robertson encountered Gracielle Dorion. He never forgot it, for it was the beginning of many things.

He had wandered to the far end of the village. He was confused, bewildered, and he wanted to think things over. In the days following his arrival he had pried the details of the scheme against Legère from Alpheus Wiggin.

They had made him disgusted and sick. The fact that Gowdy, Doan & Robertson was even partially mixed up in it filled him with a red-hot feeling of shame. He had been totally unprepared for a people of such stark simplicity as these fishing people of the North Shore; to frame up such a game upon them was unbelievable, was rankest cowardice, and right then he had determined he was not going to stand by and see it done.

And now, but an hour ago, he had encountered the girl Justine. At first sight of her his wrath grew stronger still. To put such beauty and cleverness against a great child like Legère roused his every instinct for fair play.

He had come upon the girl and Legère by Narcisse Comeau's store, and Legère had introduced them. They were going out in Legère's boat, and when Legère excused himself to go for gasolene, Robertson gazed straight in the girl's eyes, and said: "I am Robertson, of Gowdy, Doan & Robertson, and I know Legère's story—*right*, although, thank God, I had no hand in it!"

There had been something of satisfaction in seeing the sudden terror leap into her eyes, and he went on. "I would never have thought it possible to put such crude stuff over anywhere, mademoiselle—until I saw these people here. And as for your part in things, when I see this man Legère, it makes me feel that any woman who would do what you are doing"—Robertson's wrath had flamed hot—"is defilement to her Creator, mademoiselle—just that! And I'm going to see that he's set right!"

Her hands were at her breast. She seemed startled from her soul. "Don't interfere, monsieur," she gasped. "I—I was forced to do this thing, and God knows how I loathe it all. I, myself, am fighting to save him—to get him away before he learns. A crisis looms right ahead, and if I do not hasten it seems I would die!"

Legère returned at that moment, and Robertson watched them depart, suddenly feeling unaccountably ashamed of his outbreak to the girl. He turned and started abstractedly toward the far end of the village in deepest bewilderment.

Now, he had almost reached the end of the street. He was passing a long spruce hedge in front of a little half-finished house on a slope back from the street. A voice on the other side of the hedge stopped him dead.

A man's voice, although high-keyed, strangling, in its intense passion, was crying out in French: "I tell you, mamselle, I am going mad! I can stand it no longer! It remains with you to tell Legère—to save him and me!"

And then the soft little voice of wistful calmness: "I cannot, monsieur!"

"You mean you *will* not!" It had a strange catlike howl to it. "But you must!"

"It is too late, now, and——"

There came a sinister "swish" as of a little struggle. Then, tremulously:

"Calm yourself, monsieur, please! You—you hurt me terribly! My—my—arm—"

It was enough. Robertson strode swiftly to the opening in the hedge and turned in. An insane-looking, thin-visaged man with close-set lynx eyes was fiercely gripping a young girl by the arm, a swiftly appealing young girl with a gentle face of wistful prettiness. She turned toward the stranger, her wide eyes almost black with fear.

"Let her go, old man," said Robertson coolly. "And for Heaven's sake make a grab at yourself! You're all to pieces!"

He laid a firm hand on the other's wrist, the wrist that was holding the girl, and then angrily he wrenched it away.

The man's lynxlike eyes blazed to a sea-green flare. From somewhere in his clothes he snatched a knife, and crouched.

Robertson did not wait. The raw melodrama of being threatened with a knife stung him to terrific resentment.

He shot through the air in a maddened leap, and the two rolled on the ground. In a moment Robertson was up and had hurled the knife over the fence. His hand was cut and bleeding. The sight of it seemed to infuriate him.

He shot a venomous glance at the man regaining his feet. He struck him a resounding flat-handed blow on the face, and sent the other's body gyrating away in splay helplessness. He followed and pointed.

"Beat it," he ground out wrathfully, "or in just about another minute I'll beat you up into dog meat!"

He turned to the girl. "Did he hurt you?" he inquired. Now he began looking at her oddly. She

seemed trembling. And there was something about her that seemed all of a sudden to impose a great deal of interest on the manner of her reply—something that made him decide to go after the man and kill him if he had harmed her.

"No, monsieur," she said shakely, "not to speak of. My arm that is sometimes lame, that is all." Her eyes were on his bleeding fingers. "But the hand of monsieur," she went on in her quaint English. "You must come with me to the house—"

Robertson had lost himself somehow, in the clear, gray eyes. He had never looked into eyes so utterly without shadows. If eyes, as some one had said, were windows of the soul, then these were faultlessly clear for all to see within. He glanced down at his hand and slatted off the blood.

"It is nothing," he said, and on the instant added, looking into the gently serene eyes, "but perhaps you *might* tie it up." For this appealing little creature to fuss with his hand was going to be—interesting.

He sat down in the spotless little kitchen. "Who are you, please?" he asked as she brought linen and a basin of water.

"I am Graciette Dorion, monsieur."

"I see. The daughter of the notary," Robertson remarked. "I have met your father."

She was busy with his hand. "He is my step-father, monsieur."

Robertson nodded streetward. "And who was your temperamental friend?"

He thought that her face flushed slightly. "He is not of St. Anne's, monsieur. I know him but a little."

This was interesting. "He seemed a trifle ardent for a mere acquaintance," he suggested, smiling.

A moment, then: "I pity him greatly. He is

suffering much, and I am afraid he does not know the way to solace and comfort, monsieur."

There had come to Robertson one of the swift stillnesses, following unexpected reference to things of faith. Then, smiling gently: "You speak as if you might tell him all about it from experience."

There was no reply. The girl rose and without looking at him began to collect the débris of the dressings. But he liked to hear her talk, and he said again: "Do you feel that you could set him right?"

Her back was toward him when she replied, so he could not see her face. But in her voice was an appealing sadness: "When one has stood all one can bear, monsieur, the good God sends peace—else one goes mad."

Robertson was acutely busy now in his thought. "Who is this man and where did he come from, mademoiselle?" he asked abruptly.

"He calls himself Lacasse. He was wrecked here in the fog," quietly.

Robertson started. In his mind he was recalling the man's pleading to "tell Legère and save him." Suddenly: "Great God!" he thought. "Can it be possible that others know of the plot against Legère?"

Then, aloud: "Tell me, mademoiselle, was this man pleading with you perhaps to tell Legère things a certain woman was doing to him—things that would—"

The girl stared in turn, fascinated. Her clasped hands crept up before her bosom. "Monsieur," she gasped in awe, "you—you know about it?"

Robertson nodded his head. He was studying the girl levelly, now, appraisingly. That she should impress him so in spite of himself, stirred his curiosity.

"Why don't you tell Legère?" he asked at length.

"It is too late to help him. I—I have been praying constantly for some way out."

"There is only one way."

Her eyes came wide. "And that, monsieur?"

"Is to have him get away before he finds out!"

Her eagerness died down like an oilless lamp. She shook her head disappointedly. "He could never be beguiled from St. Anne's!"

"But he has," he said bluntly. "This girl, Justine, has done just that. She's going to—going to elope with him," he added grimly.

A white wave of passionate feeling came in the girl's face and stayed. In a moment her eyes opened, filmy with tears she would not shed. "Ah, well, it has gone thus far, monsieur. Only the good God can straighten it all out now!"

Passing down the yard a moment later, Robertson exploded: "That may be all right, but the good God has too many accomplices. Budro knows what's doing—he's safe; this notary knows, and won't tell as long as there's money in it; his stepdaughter knows, and can't tell, likely, because she's his stepdaughter; I know, and I can't tell because G. D. & R. is mixed up in it; and the same is true of Wiggin. But this Lacasse—Heaven only knows what *he'll* do!"

And then, down by the hedge, he said to himself fervently: "What a wonderful little girl!"

CHAPTER XV

PAWN OF DESTINY

IT was the very next day that the fisherman Sleeth came ashore again at St. Anne's. His vessel had made anchor late, and he had rowed ashore after supper. His arrival was an inconspicuous event enough in itself—he was in the crew of an upcoast schooner come to buy early cod. But ever afterward Tod Robertson wondered how things would have worked out if this man had never struck St. Anne's.

The first thing that Sleeth learned ashore was the remarkable rise to prominence of his cherished enemy Legère. It sat ill on his stomach. To such as his kind, good fortune of any one, even a friend, rankles deep. But to have wealth, prominence, and renown descend blandly upon a man who had once slapped his, Sleeth's, jaw in a crowd, and who had later almost slipped him into eternity via a too-ambitiously pinched weasand, was gall and wormwood, and rock salt on sores; it took all the joy out of life.

He was walking along the village street thinking it over, when the whole matter flashed out from his mind clean and clear. In its place came surprise, wonder, amazement.

In the early evening, a most beautiful young girl was coming along the street. She looked about as much like St. Anne's as might a little crown princess from the very center of the great world of life. And, moreover, Sleeth knew her!

He doffed his cap and bowed low. "Bon jour,

Mamselle Ducharme. This little notch of St. Anne's is gettin' t' be some prominent to attract a little queen from Le Page Dangweel!" He grinned at her patronizingly with the coarse assurance of one of his kind.

The girl did not know him. But she sensed at once that he had probably been a client of the place up in Quebec, and her heart took up a frightened pounding. With lightning judgment, however, she saw that to antagonize him would be madness, so she smiled hurriedly and said:

"I am not known by that name here, monsieur." She looked at him archly. "Monsieur will understand."

She knew he wouldn't, but she had grasped frantically at the first wile to hand. Things seemed actually closing in about her. The stranger, Robertson, knew her secret; Lacasse had become a madman; and now came this man from Quebec who knew her. She was desperately frightened, but she was fighting for time to the last ditch.

Sleeth did *not* understand. But he thought he did, and grinned amiably.

"If we pick up a load here, we'll be here some time," he announced tentatively. "P'r'aps you and me can get together some evenin' and talk over things up in Quebec—I'm an old-timer at Le Page."

Far down the street, behind Sleeth, the girl saw Legère approaching. Her smile cost every effort of her body, her will.

"It will not be possible, monsieur!" She was moving past him, still trying to smile. "I bid you—"

"Why?" he demanded peremptorily.

She could see that Legère had not seen him, but: "I am going away," she said. The smile was no longer possible. She moved past him.

He caught her arm. "When?" he persisted. It was ghastly.

"To-morrow, monsieur!" She had spoken merely to put him off, and then like a flash determined that to-morrow it should be. She drew away her arm sharply and was gone.

"I wonder what that means?" Sleeth asked of himself. He stepped into a doorway, looking after her. It was then that he saw Legère. And in another moment—Sleeth uttered to himself, fervently, a low, wondering curse—he saw the girl speak hurriedly to Legère, and draw him around the corner of one of the shops out of sight.

Sleeth was being gnawed unbearably now with speculation. What was this girl doing here? What part did Legère play in her plans? Did Legère know where she hailed from?

At this Sleeth laughed aloud. Him—a cross between one o' them monastery priests and a puling child!—him know? Sleeth was willing to bet his socks he didn't.

It was all very, very interesting—and he, Sleeth, meant to find the answer. He turned into the store. It was Narcisse Comeau's.

Tamant Boudreau stood looking through the glass. Sleeth nodded casually down the street. "Who was the clean-cut young woman, just passed, white face, black shiny hair—looked like Paris?"

"That was Mamselle Leone, m'sieu'!"

"Leone?"

"Yes, m'sieu'."

"Belong here?" craftily.

"No. She was shipwrecked here. She is to go to her kin in the States"—Tamant looked a bit vague—"some time."

"Saw her stop Dave Legère." Sleeth had a thrilling inspiration. It danced to sudden life within

him with all the flippant brazenry of a tin-spangled clown. Now he grinned. "Is he sweet on her?"

Old Tamant grinned back. "He seems to live only for her, m'sieu'!"

"Good!" Sleeth was gazing at Tainant rapturously, but hardly seeing him. He saw a way now to square himself royally with Monsieur David Legère.

The girl was here under an assumed name; he wondered why. Anyhow, it could not be possible that Legère could know her origin; he, Sleeth, would tell him. A man like Legère was not the kind to love lightly—it was going to be interesting to see him squirm.

And then it seemed fate played Sleeth's way still further. Along by the beach, a man touched his arm and a voice said: "Is it that I might get passage to Quebec, monsieur, do you think?"

He wheeled about. A drooping figure had shambled out from the seclusion of some sheds, a man with sharpened features and close-set eyes—haggard and wild looking, but a face, once seen, remembered for always. And this man, also, Sleeth knew—the river-front money shark from Quebec—Cesaire Lacasse.

Sleeth's jaw dropped. Then, wonderingly: "For the love o' God, Mr. Lacasse! Are the bars down completely up in Quebec? What are *you* doing in this place?"

"I'm trying to get away, m'sieu'!" Lacasse fingered his shirt band with a shaking hand. "If I stay here I'll be a madman, m'sieu"—that or an assassin, a murderer!"

"Bad as that," said Sleeth nonchalantly. Then on a shrewd inspiration: "I see Margot Ducharme's kid here, too. Was you—was you shipwrecked, too?" He was watching the other sharply.

"We came here together," Cesaire replied wearily. "I had to come. Again, I would go to hell sooner!"

And now, watching Lacasse's wretched face, another small portion of the true situation slipped into Sleeth's mind. From what he knew, these two Frenchmen must be rivals.

"Say," he said suddenly, "you were sweet on the Ducharme, wasn't you? Well, you're ditched, man! Ditched!"

"What do you mean, m'sieu'?"

Lacasse shook his head wearily. "No. You do not understand. That is not her interest in him."

"T'hell it isn't! And she's going t' beat it with him. I know it now."

Lacasse had revived sharply. "No!" he barked. "You must be wrong!"

"Wrong! She told me so herself, not ten minutes ago." Although Sleeth felt himself on the right track, he was quite unprepared for the result.

The man Lacasse straightened up. He was no longer drooping, no longer spirit worn. In his insane determination, he looked like a veritable devil of sinister mischief. "I will find out. And if it is so——"

Sleeth was stirred now. He saw with startling clearness where he could square old scores with Legère, and at the same time go scott free himself. He clutched the madman's arm. "Why don't you tell Legère all about her?"

Lacasse strode away around a corner.

Up back of the village with Legère, the girl suddenly went to pieces. She turned and flung herself upon him madly, wholly unstrung, clutched him to her, and—cried.

Legère was helplessly distressed. He had no words for times like these.

Finally the girl gave him a lead. She turned her face up to his. "Dost love me, David?" she half sobbed.

The man yielded himself to the overwhelming response of all his being. He grew drunk with her clinging, for he had never been a man to proffer caresses himself; and he muttered, half coherently: "God knows how much!"

His arms had gone around her, infolding her body close, with but a little part of their great power, as though he were afraid to expend all the strength that they longed to put forth. The grip of his arms silenced her swiftly. And then in the stillness Legère asked: "What—what is it? What has frightened you so?"

"The terror of losing you." It was bald, stark truth. It was the fear cry of all her being, and she could no more have dissembled now than she could have stopped living.

His arms clutched tighter, with a slow, crawling increase of their strength. "You need never have terror of that," he reassured her somberly.

She was not listening to him. "Oh, my loved one!" she cried out against his coat. "You have never known what it was to live a lifetime unloved, uncherished, as it has been my lot to live; you have never known what it was to be compelled to fight from the beginning—fight like a little wild animal to keep hold on the very place one occupied in life; to bite, to harry, to hoodwink one's way through, and to win naught but hatred for one's pitiful little successes.

"You—you—" She choked a moment, then: "You have never known what it was to have lived thus and then suddenly, like the very opening of heaven itself, to find one's self *loved*—and for one's self alone, and naught else!

"I know now that all my life there has been a hunted, famished something in me that cried out for softness, for love. And—and when I found

that you had given me yours—yours in such lavish measure—after all that I have done——”

She stopped again. In her wild vehemence she had bordered perilously on revealing things which might attract his curiosity. She subsided into still, awed silence with: “It has been thus with me, my dear one, and now it brings a great fear.”

His arms had closed about her to the very verge of discretion. Their flesh, to the uttermost finger tip, was thrilling to the feel of her body.

“Your fear is, oh *so* foolish!” he managed at length. Then: “I am not going to die!” He smiled musingly at the thought. “It seems there is nothing in God’s plan strong enough to vanquish the life I feel within me now.” A tiny instant of dead stillness. “Death *could not* have me!”

A thin, little broken whisper came up to him from the warmth on his breast. “But love—love could die!”

He was turning his head back and forth in slow negation. “Mine could not! Not while *I* am alive.”

She straightened up in his arms. She was quite calm now. Her eyes were very deep. In them burned a steady, solemn spark like the deathless glimmering of a lamp before a sanctuary.

“Ah, I love thee! If there were but one beat left in my heart, thou could’st have it for thine own!” A moment, then: “Let us not wait—let us go to-morrow, in the packet for down coast that sails at sundown.” She pressed her face to his breast. “Do this one thing for me.”

There was a soft pause, then: “Very well.”

“Promise me that naught shall prevent!”

“I promise!” he said gravely.

“It is not enough.” She shook his lapels gently. “Make thy promise as strong as thy talk of love and death!” She was intently, weirdly in earnest.

“If I am alive!” He smiled, and added: “And

death cannot get me!" A moment and she was gone, into the shadows.

David Legère moved off upward toward the hills. He craved the high places—the big places. He gave himself completely to the now almost unbearable uplift within him. His whole body, his every atom, was expectant—was crying out, happily, victoriously, as though before the great triumphal progress of a conqueror!

The voices of some men singing down on the shore came to him:

"My name was Captain Kidd, as I sailed, as
I sailed,
And God's laws I did forbid as I sailed."

Legère smiled compassionately. How little this poor, benighted pirate chieftain of old had known of the great goodness of God!

He crossed himself reverently.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DAY OF DAYS

THE day of all days in Legère's life was more than half spent.

Since early morning had the girl held him constantly at her side, and away from the village. They had spent the last day at L'Ilôt d'Amour alone.

Now the little motor boat of Legère slithered in from off the sea, cutting the water keenly like the dorsal of a shark.

In the outside harbor lay the packet for down coast. They were to sail in her at sundown. The few things they were to take were packed and ready.

Even now the girl would take no chances of a last-minute encounter, and when the boat was moored she indicated the beach away from the village on the Legère side. They walked around, and sat down for a last half hour. And destiny came to meet them.

For it was not the man Sleeth who precipitated things, after all, nor yet the money lender Lacasse—but the shepherd of the village, Father André.

Father André had been disturbed in his heart for days. Often had he gone apart into the lonely places where he might seek solution of apparently tangling problems, alone. It was while over in a deep grotto in the shore wall beyond the Legère place that he saw the little motor boat skim lightly in to the shore and land the pair.

He watched them advance around the shore in

his direction and seat themselves on the sloping shingle. He watched the girl reach out beside her and clasp the man's hand in her own. And then he rose and went down. He passed down to them over a thick matting of wild pea vines and goose tongue, and his progress was silent.

Legère was saying: "Tell me again of the Notre Dame of Paris." His eyes were far out. "It is one of God's greatest sanctuaries, and"—reverently—"some day I may see it."

It was the girl's reply that struck the priest's ears so amazingly. For she was saying, although half-heartedly, it is true: "The Notre Dame is set upon a high hill—a high hill far above the city, where—where all may see and reverence. It is built with a thousand pinnacles." Behind the girl, the priest was frowning perplexedly. "Its tall spire and golden cross pierce the sky."

Her fantastic rendition was too much. It brought things to a focus in the mind of the priest. He stepped down upon the shingle and strode forward.

Legère leaped to his feet and bowed low. "*Bon jour, Père André.*"

The priest smiled back. "My son, wilt thou go get thy boat and fetch me around to the village? I will wait with mademoiselle until you return."

Legère sprang away smilingly. The girl at the priest's feet was staring after him with eyes wide and black in a face of marble. Her heart was standing still. She was trapped—and she knew it.

Behind her the priest was saying in a voice of iron sternness: "Have you ever seen Notre Dame de Paris, my daughter?"

Dead silence. The priest could see a tiny beating in the dead pallor of the girl's temples.

"Tell me!" firmly.

"No."

"Have you ever been in France?"

No answer. The girl's hand was creeping slowly up to her breast—her throat.

"Answer me?"

"No, monsieur!"

"Thy speech here with David has things provincial in it. Where is thy home?"

The white lids were closing slowly. "In Quebec."

"And thy name—thy *true* name?" unrelentingly.

"Ducharme!"

The priest's eyes flared suddenly. "Not, perchance, of Le Piège des Anguilles?"

The girl's head fell in assent.

The priest was nodding sorrowfully. "I know—I know. I, too, am at home in Quebec." Then there came a swift reaccession of stern earnestness. "Are you betrothed to this boy?"

"Yes, father." The girl's eyes, deep, hunted, came open.

"I cannot permit it. I have been suspectful of strange things—all happening since you came among us. And this boy—you may have touched terrible things into his life. What you mean to do is wrong in the sight of God. You must leave here."

The girl wheeled to her knees. "It will kill me to leave him now, father! You *must* be merciful! I love him with all my soul!"

"He will never believe it when he knows all!"

"He will never know," the girl pleaded. "I am going to get him away, into the world, until I can convince him!"

The priest shook his head a little sadly. "God's blessing could not be upon it." The gentle face held unwonted sternness. "A vessel is leaving for up the coast to-morrow. You must be ready to go!" He held up a hand and shut off her wild pleading. "Peace! He comes!"

Ten minutes later, around on the shore of the village, the girl watched the two moving away

from her, gripped in a mounting fury of desperation. Suddenly she wheeled and almost ran.

Her uncle would help her now. He must. She must get word to Legère, to come to her. And Budro *must* look after the strange sailor who knew her, and also hold off Cesaire Lacasse.

She could make out Saul Budro standing in a knot of men over on his own side of the cove. The time for prudence was past.

A little to one side she halted, to get his attention. The knot of men were intent on a crude truck being drawn by laborers over to the new construction. Budro was grinning after it defiantly.

Beside him the building boss was staring after it and shaking his head ruefully. "I don't like it," he growled surlily. "When the fishermen see that, there'll be war!"

And Saul replied: "It'll be too late to do them any good." His voice came clearly to the waiting girl. "Am I not chief stockholder in the St. Anne Construction Company? Then why not my name upon its property?"

As the thing passed, the girl took in all it meant and her frenzied intention to seek Budro's aid seemed to freeze up within her. On the truck was a square log, hewn to form a lintel for a wharf capstan. And carved deep in the face of the log, carved deep and painted black, were the great starting letters of the word "Budro."

It seemed that Justine Ducharme stumbled endless miles along the beach before she could run. She got into her room at last, and wrote with shaking fingers:

My dear one:

Come to me at once. It is life and death.

Speak to no one.

THY JUSTINE.

I love thee—*love thee!*

Back down in the street she could see Legère's figure passing on homeward after leaving the priest. She found a tiny boy and sped him on the way with the note to the distant figure. But long before he overtook him, she saw another, a man's figure, slip after Legère with the swift footfall of a cat.

It was Cesaire Lacasse. She watched him overtake the other, and pluck him aggressively by the arm. Then—

A great weariness came over her. She drooped lifelessly and staggered into the house.

Over on the beach David Legère was staring into the face of the frothing creature before him in blind bewilderment. It was strange, but something seemed turning him to stone.

Lacasse had gone completely to pieces. He champed and slavered in his malevolent gibbering, and his eyes were lit to a cherry red like a rat's. And he was pounding his chest, too, in a frenzied way to bewilder, and screaming, on a high-pitched, strangled key:

"Me! I paid for her fine things, her school! Me—Cesaire Lacasse! Three hundred louis d'or I paid! She was kept for me always up there in Quebec—for me, Cesaire Lacasse, and no other! I came here with her to get back some of the money, and now—"

A great hand had closed on his arm. "Who do you mean?"

Lacasse licked at the froth on his mouth, and peered venomously up into the blue eyes that had gone almost black.

"Who?" he screamed. "Your Justine Leone—who is Justine *Ducharme*." He watched the look of terrible groping that clouded the other's eyes. His voice snarled in its triumph. "Aye, you've heard the name—I tell you where! You've heard all your

men back from Quebec speak of it—when in secret they draw heads together, speak of it with laughter that covers shame—The Eel Pot of Margot Du-charme, the den that spawned this daughter!"

A frozen blankness was spreading over Legère's face.

Lacasse tore himself free of the lifeless hand. "God laughs at you, young fool! She was brought here to betray you—a trivial task. She was here—hidden—before the fog came. And you, the very man, were the one to fetch her from the sea."

He watched the stricken eyes turn to the new construction. "Aye, look at it; the first cause of things. It was for that it was done! Railroad! St. Anne's will never see a railroad! That is to be a stronghold—a stronghold that will bleed the sea and defy the land—a stronghold for Justine Ducharme's uncle, Saul Budro." He pointed swiftly. "Look!"

The crude truck with its lintel-log burden was being turned around, and on it Legère read the great carved name. In that moment a grim hand might have felt out the thread of David Legère's youth and snapped it.

The splendid, gleaming kingdom of his boyhood ended there. It was a gray-faced *man* that spoke now: "How—how do I know about—about the girl?"

Swiftly the other flared at him. "Ask Père André. He knows her people."

It was hauntingly strange; Legère's pilgrimage up the slope to the priest's. The terror of knowing that some awful dissolution was going on within him stayed in his memory till he died. At times, in sudden, clear flashes, he knew that he wabbled—his legs were not going right; and the way was long, terribly long. And then the whining—the plaintive little whimpering that went on constantly:

"No—oh, no! It cannot be! God *could* not!"—a whimsical little protest like that of a very little boy.

Then, straightening up, he knew the voice to be his own voice, knew it to be the frightened protest of the boy in him, that was dying hard; and as for God— Back he would sink into his wavering groping again. And so on until he came to the priest's house.

The priest gave one startled look into the man's gray face, and the eyes that seemed frozen. And his heart leaped with swift compassion, for he knew now that Legère *knew*. "Oh, my son, my son!" he pleaded pityingly. "Come into the house."

Legère stood like a rock. "No. I'll say it here." He stared stonily, then: "Why have you done it? Why have you fooled me with all these lies of a God?"

The priest braced himself as against a storm. "I have not fooled you, my son. They are *not* lies." He watched the thing of a man's soul being inexorably walled up in the other's eyes. And he knew it for what it was, and he flung out a hand in passionate remonstrance.

"Oh, my son, listen. God is but teaching you—I know not what, but that which shall be for your soul's good. You are a man, my son, of—of noble handiwork." There were blinding tears in the priest's eyes now. "And when I tell you that God reckons the littlest sparrow, and holds even the mighty sea in his hand—"

"That's it—the sea! *The sea!* And even so I trusted it, and see what it's brought me! Money to bait me on; love to— Ah-h!" The great creature threw back his head and laughed raucously, the bitter bravado that is a man's tears.

The priest raised a trembling, rebuking hand. "David Legère, God is but making thee a man,

and the making of many a man is only through his breaking. This I say unto thee, that if God is using the sea as his agent, it can bring thee justice, too, and readjustment!"

The lurid eyes flamed straight into his. "When the sea squares me for what I've lost—when it brings back honor, man's place—and a love to replace the one that was—then will I believe in your God, and not till then. Meanwhile"—he wheeled away—"I'm playing my own God! And I'm meting out my own justice."

From the elemental brute instincts, deep down within the man, the lid was off. Long ago at the Magdalenes he had been sickened at soul to find himself crazed like this, and tearing at a man's throat. Now he gloried in it. He gave himself to it unreservedly—with all his soul. He gloated upon the blood-red vale of his fury.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BREAKING OF BUDRO

DAVID LEGÈRE passed swiftly down the slope. He did not stagger now; and he no longer babbled mindlessly. At the shore he stooped and wet his hand in a pool and slapped it about his neck and bared chest, as if to quench some mounting fire.

Then straight on across the cove toward Budro's Point. Once he bent and made fast his shoes—bound them tight on his feet and stamped them on the rocks to test their grip. Over on the Point, he laid a sudden hand on his moist neckband, ripped it off and threw it away. He twisted his head from side to side in sudden relief.

He rounded great rocks and before him loomed the dim bulk of the gray, silent retreat of Saul Budro. He was to see within at last. He ran lightly up a little path. The sole door in the end was before him. He kicked it out with his foot.

There were many tense faces turned toward his, faces wrought out upon the inner gloom like masks hanging on a black wall. Then sudden, hurried confusion; quick changes like a kaleidoscope; a kicking of things into concealment.

There were evil-visaged seamen that had been feeding at a rough table, come surprisedly to their feet. There were strange, yellowed human creatures with faces like idols in a Mongol temple, now crawling stealthily into oblivion over one another—all under the light of suspended lanterns, pearllike in the semigloom.

"I'm looking for Saul Budro! Where is he?" And now came smells—tar and oakum, and fried pork and tea, and a sharp sinister tinge from the smoking Chinese, like bitter incense.

Already a big, bulking figure was striding down the room. He loomed white with wrath before the stark-faced man alone down by the wrecked entrance. Across his face the great scar burned in a purple welt.

"Here I am. Now say what you've got to while your tongue's workin' and your lights is pushin' wind!"

The apparition spoke: "Get ready, Saul Budro, for I'm going to break you and spoil you like the beast you are! I'm going to pay you for the Golden Hope, and for messing up my life with Justine Ducharme. You're going to——"

A great fist smashed his mouth to silence.

No thing of mental computation was the battle that followed; rather was it an instinctive blood lust of wild beasts. The great black fighter strove and tore with bitter fury; and the white-faced thing he fought clung and thrust and wrapped about him with the cold, deadly soullessness of a great snake.

In a terrible clinch Legère's riddled shirt came away, leaving his torso bare and magnetically white under its grim design in blood. But he was back and clinging again, crushing the throat before him between hands that——

An apelike sailor stole up and landed a terrific blow behind Legère's ear. He staggered and fell, and his big, brutal, half-beaten antagonist, in deadly deliberation, drew back his heavy-shod feet one after the other, and drove them into the naked ribs.

A strange stir like a hoarse sigh went through the place. The thing was on his feet—gathering himself. Before him Saul Budro waited, a look

of uneasy awe creeping into the hatred in his eyes. Then—

The ghastly white creature burst upon his antagonist with such terrible force that he reeled far back, on, like a rushing whirlwind, struck a crude table, and crashed down behind it. Like a great, lithe cat, the big white fighter leaped through the air and landed on the body among the wreckage.

In the room about them, inaction blew up. A half dozen men leaped upon Legère, dragging him away. But the lid was off with the man. There was nothing human about him. He was but a horrible automaton, whose sole function was slaughter.

He leaped clear. He snapped a table-leg from the wreckage and exploded among them—murderously.

Saul Budro's place blossomed superbly into the splendid crimson of a shambles.

Some of them got away. These jammed their scared bodies into sanctuaries about the walls. And from there they watched.

In the center of the floor it was done. It went on in ever-mounting horror, and amid a rigid quiet.

Budro had been standing uncertainly, unmanned, and scared in his soul. Legère lit upon him, floored him and dragged him to the open. Then he must have unjointed an arm, for a sudden, great cry ushered in a stillness of death. And then—

A boatman in the crowd turned away, his face unwittingly a-grin as in the presence of impending death. Another spat out his tobacco, deadly sick.

David Legère was breaking his man even as he said. Slowly, in the quivering deadlock out there on the floor, one of Budro's legs seemed becoming fantastically disarranged. And then in the deep, lethargic hush, came a tiny little "snick!" of

barely audible delicacy—and the mass on the floor lay still.

Legère got up, after a moment. Almost naked, the tall young figure stood, stained and ghastly like some horribly profaned statue beneath a swinging lantern. He stooped for some tattered rags of clothing, clutched them up upon his bare body, and staggered out.

BOOK FOUR A MAN'S SOUL



CHAPTER I

THE BATTLEFIELD

THE hard, unyielding thing that was to become life to David Legère, dated from that night.

He had moved blindly away from Budro's, up into the darkening wilderness, knowing somehow that he was to be a theater of war, as it were, from which he would emerge with every last thing of his previous life's faith completely annihilated.

For a little time, he dared not yield himself to it. It was too horrible to feel that the very bulwarks of one's life were about to be battered down before the murderous attacks of one's reason; battered down and strewn afar like ruins on a field. Then, suddenly—

He was down on the ground, and the battle was on. At first he simply writhed, as if his torture were wholly physical. Then as his body became stilled, all the things of spirit, of faith, that had held so strongly in his life heretofore he marshaled before him to destroy. He began at the beginning that none might be missed—recalling even the little trifles, the childish beliefs of his boyhood.

He saw himself studying his catechism eagerly, fervently, with all the confidence of a little warrior, girding upon his young life the absolutely invincible armor of—a God. He could see his first rosary—it had been his father's.

His heart had swelled at having it for his own. He had never held it in his hands without thinking of all the world of prayers it had marked for his father; devout prayers, fervent prayers—a man's prayers for the great things of life, and for his kind. And he had tried to distil from his own young life prayers equally worthy in kind to those he knew must have been his father's.

He had prayed for strength. As a little boy, early set to battle with life, for one to be strong, bodily strong like the men, seemed the supremest dowry of life. And it had been his.

Then with the dawning of his young manhood and his vision of St. Anne's, his prayer had changed to a constant yearning for wisdom, for the eyes to see what could be done, for the wisdom to carry it out. God! How he had prayed for it! And out of the intensity of his wanting had dawned a glimpse of the things which would bring it to pass, and all pointed to—the sea.

He had studied, followed, waited on—lived with the sea, until his lore surpassed the lore of all others. Then he perceived the need of money; and his very following after his first prayers brought him answer to the second—money came from the sea. Then his whole life, body and soul, burst into dazzling fulfillment at the sea's final gift of—love.

Here, the man, reliving again the short span of shining memories, suffered horribly. The great uplift that for weeks had been as a song within him was now but a great, torturing urge of the body, a hopeless ravening passion, still but half understood, a passion that tore at him remorselessly, that scorched along through his battered, beaten body like a raging flame, knowing now its own hopelessness of fulfillment, shaking the man as with

ague, rendering him sick with an engulging nausea—only to come to a mocking end.

And this point was the turning point. Here the man faced about in spirit and fought back along the trail of his life, that had been so softly lit by devout fires. And he sought out every devotional spot along the way, and he dragged from each the God that had sanctified it, and stamped out the tenderness that clung to its memory, and defiled the place thereof with a fury of curses.

Forward and back, along the way of his life did Legère rage, and despoiled its God-memories forever. And after hours of darkness and raging, all holy things that had been in the life behind David Legère were laid waste and desolate, were scorched and blackened.

It was all tragically childlike—the first terrible hurt of an earnest-souled boy, a hurt that had stirred up blindest wrath and retaliation, and so deep that it would never die. Legère lay spent in the midst of a blankness and a stillness ever deepening, and that which was like to the passing of a legion of battling wings was roaring away into stillness. Then——

Slowly life came back. He knew himself flat on the ground. He was feeling the sharp prickles of the grass roots on his closed eyelids; he knew that the earth was cold to his face as it turned, that a stone was digging aggressively into his jaw. Legère got up and went home.

The numb blankness still held within him. Inside the house, the first things he noticed were the little things, the trivial things that probably were the first things registered on his consciousness as a child; the hooks for clothes in the back entry—they seemed very high up; a great, worn knot in the floor by the kitchen stove; the curious smell of the herring firkin in the closet under the stairs;

the step next the last, on the stairs, that squeaked like a mouse; the spot on his bedroom wall paper that looked like a face. He flung himself across his bed.

He knew when his mother came. He heard her low moan of pitying terror when she stood in his door. He knew perfectly well, or something in him did, that she brought water and a towel and washed the blood—the caked, tenacious blood—off his face, and chest, and arms.

But this numb blankness was very hard to throw off. Something in him knew that when he did throw it off it would be to a life wholly new to him; and the something that knew hated to begin it.

It was only when his mother laid down her towels and took his head in her lap that he sat up quickly and moved aside. It was *love* that touched him, and instinctively he recoiled, instinctively he was afraid—even of his mother for an instant.

Along with faith, love was treacherous in its way of undermining one's sense and reason. He had learned that fact lying the night out on the ground, and his job of steeling himself had been well done, and was to stand forever.

He dropped his head in his hands. "I'm all right." His voice was ragged, raw.

"Davy, lad!" Her eyes yearned on her great, disheveled son luminously, in dumb anguish. "Can't ye tell me—can't ye, Davy, lad?"

She watched his head fall again into his hands, noted the great black bruises on the white skin, and, watching him, she sensed to the full how the fervent-hearted boy had turned to bitter manhood in a night.

Her tears flowed now, in deepest compassion. "Davy, boy," she pleaded, "tell me. I'm your mother—I can help."

No motion came from the great hunched figure, but he said: "No one can help." His mind was still blank to further reasoning—empty. "There is nothing to be helped *to!*"

His mother's hands were at her bosom. "Yes, lad, there is. There's always some one *else* to be helped; and there's always—God!"

"God!" Legère was stung a thousand miles out of his blankness. He came to his feet. He almost screamed. "God—*hell!*!"

At the last his voice broke—it had started in defiant derision, and trailed upward to the futile little croak of a sob. But there was nothing of derision in his face—only terrible hurt, and tragic bitterness and suffering.

His cry had struck his mother like a blow. Her tears had ceased flowing in the shock of her distress and horror; she sat like one stunned.

The man was alive again to the uttermost fiber. And he was lurching aimlessly about in his listless, flapping rags, doing strange things to his head, his neck, his throat, with great, powerful, groping hands and arms.

"It's all gone!" he cried out. "Ambition, love, trust, the young fool that was a boy—this thing you call God! There's nothing left! There was nothing in the beginning—there's nothing left now!"

Great things had entered into the spirit of the woman seated on the bed. Her hands had dropped tranquilly into her lap, her rugged figure had straightened.

"There's life left, David Legère! There's life here, and life hereafter—God or no God, you can't get away from that."

Her eyes were steadfast and solemn like lights in a cathedral. In her simple gropings she had come upon one great need—he must be stung, commanded, led, urged to do his part still. "And I

want that ye should be a man," she went on, "and not a coward! That ye should take all the things that God sends ye and learn of 'em, and profit by 'em." Her voice dropped a trifle. "It's what your father done, my son—it's what all men have got to do."

"It's no use!" he said grimly. "You might as well stop!"

Her manner never relaxed. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, David Legère! Have ye ever thought of that *this* way: that him whom the Lord has chosen for great things, must first be made great himself to be worthy of 'em, and to bear 'em. And it seems the truest way to train a real man to greatness is by hard knocks; it's the only way to teach him sure, and to teach him quickest!"

"It's so with every man that's been great. Have y'ever thought it so—tell me that, David Legère?" A moment, then: "And the big man learns and goes on; and the *little* man, that ain't no way worthy after all, he breaks and goes under—till he *does* learn," she added in a low voice.

The man was shaking his head in constant weary negation. "No use! No use! I went back over my life out there and pulled all these things up by the roots. It's *done*. I couldn't undo it, even if I would. There's nothing left. It's all gone."

There was something noble in the mien of the woman seated on the bed, something noble in the strength of her conviction. "Well, won't ye try, David? Jest try?"

"You don't know how little chance there is!"

As she gazed at him the mother in her suddenly rose and swamped all else. She had been pleading to the sturdy, direct qualities of her own nature in her son; what she could not sense was the finer, more volatile things inherited from his French father, soaring things of passionate aspiration, of

transcendent fineness that had been hurt unto death, and lay raw and spent and quivering.

She began speaking again—she was smiling wanly, tremulously through tears. “It seems like the heart in me’ll break, Davy, lad, to think of ye without a God. For the God in us is—is *love*, son. My heart’s always been so full of it for you, Davy, lad; and, now, without a God, I can’t help thinkin’ ye’ll—ye’ll find it hard to be lovin’ me back.”

Her mouth trembled to silence a moment; now, there was a pitiful forlornness about the gray braids of her hair, the coarse, cotton nightgown, the worn carpet slippers. “And there’s St. Anne’s and—yer father,” she went on musingly. “I’m wonderin’ what yer father’ll be thinkin’, now.”

Legère began speaking, on the impulse of his first real reaction to this, his new life, an impulse now rearing up its head within him in deathless determination. “I’m *not* going to quit! I’m going on.” His teeth ground harshly together. The clenching of his fists brought great welts into the contour of his naked arms. “I’m going to beat them—all!”

The woman was shaking her head sorrowfully. “Ye can’t do *anything* without a God, Davy!” she said solemnly.

He was looking himself over seemingly now, marking his rags and dishevelment, holding up his hands and arms and noting their bruises. “Can’t I?” His eyes struck steely fires. “I’m going to be my own god now! And—I’ll show you!”

CHAPTER II

THE HERETIC

THE storm brewing overnight among the people of St. Anne's burst just after dawn—upon David Legère. He had come downstairs before daylight. He had lighted a lamp, and kindled a fire in the cook stove.

A moment later he found himself listening. Some disturbance was abroad in the semigloom. It was as though a breeze had sprung up and was tumbling heavy, brawling rollers on the beach. But there was no wind.

Suddenly a thunderous beating came on the back door. Legère opened it. The yard outside was black with men. They stood in a mass, and every face was fixed on his own.

"What do you want?" he said.

"Come out and we'll show you!" yelled a voice. Legère stepped down. "All right," he said. "Show me."

They herded and jostled around him in a dense, inimical ring. Before him, McTavish, the Scotsman, was speaking loudly, his face working: "What ha' ye to say for yersel', mon? Is it truth ye're in league wi' the smuggler?"

"No!"

"Why then did ye cozen the monney outen us a'? I'm fair thinkin' ye're a liar, Davie Legère!"

Legère stiffened. "Shut up that or I'll——"

"Of course he's a liar!" came from the crowd. "He was gitt'n ready to run away—him and that castaway woman was travelin' down shore in the *Nightingale!* Matt Sleeth told me so!"

McTavish was trembling visibly. His face was the face of a Shylock seeking his ducats. "What we've come for is to see if ye're goin' t' give us back our monney."

Here, old Jean Corteau burst through the crowd like a maniac. He shook his fist right under Legère's brows.

"Give it back!" he screamed. "The twenty golden louis of me and my old woman! Give it back, I say!"

"I haven't got your money!"

The frenzied old creature reached up a grimy paw and slapped smartly the jaw towering above him. It was a silly blow—of an old man, but Legère's nostrils flared wide. He snatched up old Jean and thrust him around behind him out of the way. And the pack closed in.

A man rushed up from the beach, Jo Michelle, who fought in to Legère. Another from the village—Tod Robertson. And he held in his fist a leveled weapon that looked little and stumpy, and ominously deadly.

The men fell back uncertainly before this. Robertson pushed Legère back and stepped in front of him. "What's the matter with you people?" he cried out. "Do you want to kill the only real man you've got in the place?"

"He's a liar and a thief!" some one shouted. "He's got our money and he won't give it back!"

"Hell he has!" Robertson snapped back sharply. "Saul Budro's got your money. And he's got Legère's, too, ten dollars to your one, and his shore privilege, also!"

"But Legère is in league with the smuggler himself."

"In league with him!" Robertson showed them his utter contempt. "Why, last night this man, when he found out about it, went and *broke* Saul

Budro—the greatest feat one man ever did. If Budro lives, he'll move like a crab for the rest of his life."

He thwarted a sudden motion in the crowd. "Wait! If you go over there, they're ready to shoot you up, and you can't do any good now—it's too late!" His eyes had narrowed shrewdly. "Who told you Legère was in with Budro?"

A sullen pause, then: "It was Felix Dorion, the notary! We've been to see him."

There was a sultry silence. Then Robertson exploded. "That damned rat!" he jerked out. He shoved the gun into his pocket and took a step forward.

"Now, listen, you people!" he began. "You don't know me nor anything about me, but you can tell when a man's telling the truth, and I want you to listen to this and believe it.

"That man Dorion himself is the man who framed up this whole thing. It was Budro's game in the first place to get Legère's site and to prevent the railroad from coming to St. Anne's! But this man Dorion was the lad who showed him how it could be done legally. Now, that's the truth! Never mind how I know so much—but you can bank on that for a fact!"

A buzzing like that of angry bees went through the crowd. There was an immediate motion toward the road. And then something halted them. They stared up the pathway back of the house in sullen anticipation.

The tall figure of Père André was swinging energetically down the path. He gazed around with a frown of intense disapproval. He raised a commanding arm.

"Disperse to your homes, and let there be no more of this!" His glance fell to the rather horrible figure on the doorstep. "I might think you

all wild beasts!" He shut off a voice that had begun explaining. "I know of all that. This man is not to blame. Now go, all! And no more of such works!"

He turned and laid a gentle hand on Legère's shoulder. "David, my son," he began half tremulously, "come into the house and I will help thy mother bind up thy bruises."

All through the night the heart of the priest had been wrung with the memory of Legère's visit of the late afternoon. Now, feeling the other's shoulder beneath his hand, he yearned upon him mightily.

But at the touch of the hand, Legère stood up and it slid away. "There is no need, m'sieu'." The voice was level, expressionless. And Legère's eyes on the priest were equally devoid of any response to the pitiful eagerness of the priest's own. "To-day I work under a new code, m'sieu', and, already"—brushing the dirt from his shirt sleeves—"it seems it is to fight!"

Overlaying the priest's hurt was now a great fear for what the other had evidently undertaken in deadly earnest. The thing was inconceivable. The young man surely could not mean it.

Father André's voice came full and deep. "David Legère, I say unto you that you cannot even fight—without a God!"

Legère was slapping at his dust-grimed chest—his thighs. "Can't I?" It came devoid of great interest.

"Not to win! No!" The priest's figure straightened. "The man who sets himself apart from God, the man who sets out to live unto himself alone, with no thought of others save hatred in his heart, may fight away the hours, the days, the years of his life fruitlessly, until he is pitted even of the good God himself! Down to the bitterest

depths of despair will he fall, for in fighting for himself alone he plants the germ of defeat in his every act!"

David Legère raised his head and spoke. A little to one side, young Robertson stood listening, his eyes shining intensely; he did not know what it all meant but he knew he was in the presence of a thing big in its portent. Now, there was something uncanny, something almost fanatical, in the gray face and gleaming eyes of the young fisherman.

"Listen, O man of God!" he was saying, and the priest started at the implied irreverence. "All my life I have done my best to live true as I saw it—not alone in Masses and in prayers, but in my very thoughts. And behold me to-day—laughed at of God; beaten of the very people I lived only to help; everything fine in me made mock of; an outcast, and a *fool*."

"Now I count no longer on God, or on man. Everything that lives within me now lives but to win that which I set out to do—in *my own way!* And in that way, m'sieu', God has no part! And that—is said, m'sieu'!"

"It can never succeed!" Suddenly the priest's face quivered. The boundless grief that filled him at thought of this, his almost son, forsaking his church, his very faith—becoming a thing of aversion and contempt to the very vilest man in the village—a heretic, an apostate from God——The grief of it sank deep into his heart, and hot, yearning tears swam in his eyes. He held out quivering hands.

"David," he pleaded brokenly. "David, my son!"

Legère looked unmoved. "What is said, is said, m'sieu'!"

A long moment the priest gazed. Then his arms

fell. He drew his cassock about him and walked in sorrowing dignity away.

From one side Tod Robertson began speaking. He was intensely moved. "Say, old-timer, I—I don't know anything about all this—I'm not very religious—but don't you—don't you sort of think the old chap was right? Doesn't it strike you that you've—*started something?*"

Nothing in the way of reply came to him, and he went on: "I've never thought of it before, but it *does* give you a sort of 'left-in-the-air' feeling to think there's nothing, absolutely nothing to hang to—even if you haven't been in the habit of playing up to it." A pause, then: "It does underlie all our dealings, you know—that is, it *should*, before we can get away with things successfully."

"Was it this thing of God, then, that won success for Saul Budro, for Cesaire Lacasse, for Felix Dorion?" A swift silence, then: "For Justine Ducharme?"

"I don't know." Robertson's face went suddenly earnest, intensely earnest. "But let me tell you this: The man that deliberately sets out to monkey with the laws of life and living is doing a pretty ticklish thing. You can probably get away with it, but you'll have a damned lonely time of it, and *you* will be the chap that pays."

"So be it. We will say no more, m'sieu'."

But Robertson stopped him. He was suddenly conscious of his own unintentional part in the things that had wrecked this man. "Just a minute, old man," he called. "You're not going to give up your plans for St. Anne's, are you?"

"Never, m'sieu'!"

"Bully for you! And what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to build a cannery, and then—the railroad."

"How?"

Legère stared levelly. "That will come later, m'sieu'!"

Robertson was strangely agitated. The Gowdy, Doan & Robertson policy had for weeks filled him with a deep feeling almost of contempt. Now, he wanted to atone for his part, and he wanted to show Eleazer Gowdy that his policy of suppression would not work forever. He stepped forward and put out his hand. "Let me help, will you?"

Legère did not take the outstretched hand. "A man will not be liked in this country who trails with David Legère from now on, m'sieu'. I am worse than an outcast! You do not understand what it means to these people to come out from—the faith, as I have done!"

"And I do not care." The hand was still out.

But Legère shook his head. "No, m'sieu'. I am still too raw."

The hand fell. "All right. But I'm at your back when you want me, just the same."

CHAPTER III

THE OOLONG COCKTAIL

TOD ROBERTSON moved away thinking swiftly. Here in St. Anne's he had come to look on some pretty big workings. It was going to be tremendous, watching it all played out.

His way to the village led him by the house of Felix Dorion. He began wondering just how the events of the night had affected the little daughter.

He had come to know of the fight at Budro's from one of Saul's men who had come to the village for the storekeeper, Wiggin, who was something of a doctor; Lacasse must have told all to Legère after all. And the little girl—Robertson had been derisively impatient with himself, but this little creature had been constantly in his thoughts, always wistfully—and tenaciously.

At the opening in the spruce hedge he stopped suddenly and stared. Up by the house the yard was full of men; two seemed to be guarding the door. They were the same men who had been at Legère's.

Robertson turned in hurriedly. "What is it?" he asked of the silent figures. "Is some one hurt?"

The man raised a morose, brooding face. "Not yet, m'sieu'," he said. There was no levity about it.

Robertson stepped up to the door, and made to enter. One of the men raised a face dully haggard. "If it pleases m'sieu'—" He barred the way.

Robertson was deeply puzzled. Through the window he could see the girl passing back and forth, and she had been crying. He turned sharply on the man beside the door. "Tell me what is going on here!" he commanded in his crisp French.

"M'sieu' Dorion is going away from St. Anne's," the man said with sinister meaning, and added: "For good." He dropped again into his own morose reflections.

Robertson stared. Then: "His daughter?" he asked, suddenly. "Is she going, too?"

Came a noncommittal shrug from the gloomy one. He did not look up.

Robertson shoved him brusquely aside, and went into the house. In the little sitting room, Felix Dorion sat in a chair by the fireplace. Two silent fishermen stood on either side.

Dorion's eyes were very black, very intense. His hair was lamentably disarranged; his coat revealed a long rip from under one sleeve; his linen had been torn badly at the neck. He was watching the clumsy loading of a little black valise.

He looked up at Robertson, and spoke in English. "Can't you do something with this swine?" he asked.

Robertson hesitated. Underneath, he felt this man was getting only what was coming to him. On the other hand—

Dorion went on insinuatingly: "Perhaps if these men knew *all* the parties connected with this affair—"

"Wait!" Robertson stopped him. For every reason in the world he could not have his remote connection with things known now. He turned violently on the men, with a torrent of remonstrance in French.

It provoked an odd demonstration. Robertson experienced something of the determination of the sea folk aroused. They simply laid hold of him and hurled him on toward the front door. "*Tiens!*" he cried out. "I say no more!"

They stood about him uncertainly. Events inside called them. The notary was slashing out in pale

fury. "*Cochons!* That linen! Must I depart looking like a pig?"

They yanked him to his feet and stuck a hat upon his head. It reposed upon his disturbed hair with the ludicrous jauntiness always assumed by a hat put on one's head by another. Felix's eyes dribbled lightnings.

Graciette appeared in the kitchen door with a needle and thread. "Just one moment, messieurs!" Her tear-stained face was raised, pleadingly. "You cannot wish monsieur to—to travel looking so." She turned to the rent in Dorion's coat.

But a low exclamation from the men, and Dorion was jerked about and hustled out. Two burly fishermen held his arms. In impotent resentment the man struggled furiously. His squirming, writhing body simply left the ground.

His stalwart captors marched along stolidly, with Felix dangling between them—out the door, off the doorstep and down the yard. One of the others snatched up the valise, and the men scattered about the place fell in behind and trailed after.

Robertson watched from the threshold. Down by the hedge, now, half the village was congregated on the mysterious scent of trouble. Probably the man behind on his doorstep, of all that looked upon Felix Dorion, realized something of the extent of his humiliation.

The tall figure stalked along now with an air of haughty disdain, in his garb of a scarecrow. The generously-ripped jacket gaped widely at every stride in open, ruinous frankness; the rags blew distressingly back from his throat, disclosing a chest and neck of rather meager development; and the hat? The hat teetered rakishly on his head, in tragically comic nonchalance. And the crowd laughed. They giggled discreetly; they chuckled

excitedly; they brayed unrestrainedly in coarse derision.

And, so doing, they lacerated Felix Dorion's soul.

Tod Robertson turned and went into the house. In the little sitting room he stopped, filled with a man's helpless panic before a woman's suffering.

Gracielle Dorion was kneeling on the floor, her shoulders and outflung arms across a table, her face buried. But the shoulders were stirring with emotion—the hands clutching at each other in suppressed misery.

"Oh, mademoiselle!" It was so full of a man's deep sympathy and feeling that the face on the table turned away from him, and the girl burst into terrible weeping. It was the final abandon of a life repressed through the years until beyond all human endurance.

Robertson acted on instinct—simply, directly, without reflection whatever. He dropped lightly on the floor beside the girl, gathered her whole shaking figure in his arms and pressed her face down tenderly into the hollow of his shoulder.

"Oh, God, little girl," he said huskily, "don't—don't cry like that—don't!"

His eyes above her hair were staring out of the window, unseeingly, through a sudden scalding film of their own. The girl in his arms was making a noble fight for control, but after each choking restraint the tearing sobs seemed to break forth with renewed vigor. And Robertson, deeply moved, was saying:

"It's a rotten old world, sometimes, little girl—rotten, and cruel, and unfair. And sometimes the people that ought to be hanged—hanged every morning with neatness and dispatch, seem to get away with all kinds of dirt, while little, tender folk, little, harmless, innocent folk—like you, mademoiselle—seem to get the little end of it always."

He was patting her shoulders, tenderly, and suddenly he pressed his lips down into her neck. And the girl's body relaxed against his own, gently, naturally, almost as though it sought by very contact to absorb into itself the very first kindly sympathy of a lifetime.

And then, still holding her tear-stained face averted, the girl put herself gently out of his arms. "Please, monsieur," she breathed huskily, and stood up.

She stood with face turned away and, after a great long, quivering sigh, like a little child that has cried itself to exhaustion, she began in her careful, precise English: "I am very sorry, monsieur, to—to—"

"Forget it!" Robertson interrupted in suddenly assumed gruffness. "Now, listen here." He took her arm and impelled her firmly toward the kitchen. "You're going to come out here with me and sit down till you feel better."

His manner, now, blossomed into cheeriness. "I'm going to make you some tea—I'm really grand at it, little one, and it'll buck you up." He put her into a chair by the kitchen table. "Now, sit there where I can see you, and watch me make the passes over little Caddy Tea. I'm going to brew you an oolong cocktail that'll make the birdies sing."

He lifted the stove covers, slid in some kindling, and pulled forward the kettle. He found the teapot, and the tea in a cupboard. He estimated the amount of tea with meticulous precision, and then, while he waited, with keen wisdom he gazed quietly out of the kitchen window to give the girl full chance to regain herself.

And Graciette? She began at length to gaze at him with a growing wonder in her heavy-lidded, saddened face. It was unheard of, his tenderness

and sympathy. It was against all her life's conception of men.

Père André came nearest, but then he was a man anointed of God—one who *was* tenderness and sympathy. But she doubted if even Père André could make tea.

She looked up as Tod passed her the cup. Her face now was beginning to be shyly conscious. "I never knew, monsieur," she said earnestly, "that a man could be so kind."

"Didn't?" he grunted, savagely, now. "Well, poor you! It's time you learned."

He sat down now at the other end of the table, well against the wall, where he could watch her face unobserved. It did things to him—this little creature's face with the gentle lines of youth so wistfully molded into the impress of sorrow. "And now you're going to tell me all about it," he began. "What are they going to do with your step-father?"

"I think only that they are making him leave St. Anne's for good, monsieur. A vessel is sailing for Quebec this morning."

Something in her manner, now that she was quiet, intrigued Robertson. "You are not sorry he goes, are you?"

She did not answer. She drank her tea.

"He was a smooth proposition. Was he good to you?"

Silence. Then, "Please do not trouble about it, monsieur."

The face of the young man across the table was grave. "You don't mean he was actually cruel to you?"

No answer. The girl's lids fell wearily.

"Tell me!" commandingly.

"Sometimes, monsieur."

"The damned pup!" Robertson ejaculated under

his breath. Then: "What are you going to do?" bluntly.

"I shall get along, monsieur." She tried to smile. He stood up. "I'm going to help," he said firmly. "I want to."

Graciette rose. She looked gratefully into the deeply earnest face. "But I do not need for anything yet." She put out a hand and Robertson fell upon it impulsively. "Ah, but you are kind, monsieur! I shall never forget it—your goodness to me."

"That's all right," he said. "That part was easy." His eyes were very bright, very earnest, very sincere. "It was so easy that if I can't keep it up it looks as if it was going to be hard for me. I'm not going to say more, now," levelly. "Just at present that tea seems to have gone to my head. Au revoir."

Going down the slope, Robertson flicked a match alight, and pulled the smoke of a cigarette deep into his lungs. "Looks to me like love stuff," he remarked to himself grimly of his own emotions.

Every fiber in him seemed newly alive, seeking expression. But he strode on calmly, holding himself gripped in cold-iron reason. He had thought himself in love before, and this time he was going to make no mistake. The girl's clear gray eyes made any other course a crime.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW ORDER

BY the first of October, Legère's faculties had been developed into a thing of hard, unswerving efficiency by a process like forging on iron. Life in St. Anne's had been upturned to its bottom, and under a score of suddenly changed conditions did the village come to face the fall that was to have meant so much.

Among its individuals, David Legère had been living his new-evolved code with cold deliberation, bending to it every instinct of his life. He had gone about it systematically, determinedly.

If he found himself entertaining thoughts that tended toward softness, as he saw it, he had dismissed them peremptorily. The practice had a strange effect, which at first he noted with gratification: The thoughts left his mind with increasing celerity—finally stayed out altogether.

He was succeeding in rendering himself blank to all things spiritual. And in so doing he was backtracking deliberately along the eternal course laid out by the Creator—a thing no man may do and live.

As for his plans, he had built a place of his own—a fish stand. It was on the Legère site itself. It was set up on crude, half-trimmed logs hurriedly hewn from the woods. These were bedded in heaps of beach boulders.

It was very ugly. But it was very strong. In this, when completed, he had conducted an active business in buying and selling part of the fall line

fish. In going into this, his reasoning had been simple: He was to build a cannery, and building a cannery meant money—and he hadn't a sou. And the only thing that offered a chance of making a dollar was the fall cure of fish, and that, too, would take money.

Here he remembered Robertson and his offer of help. He had gone to him and in plain, bald terms asked for a loan, and got it. In becoming a buyer with the proceeds, he became a competitor of Gowdy, Doan & Robertson, in a way, but in his new code he refused to think of that. His whole mental process was focused on the problem of getting the piles of his cannery down before things along the coast stiffened up with the frost.

Among the other individuals with whom events had wrought vital change, David's mother, Margaret Legère, was slowly letting go; her son had done a thing that struck her life at its very roots. To Graciette Dorion, too, living alone, the whole world was changed with Legère's disavowal of his faith. It was like taking two great loves, one for God and one for a man, and cleaving them violently in twain with a sword.

Saul Budro? Saul was recovering and cursing the delay that prevented his getting on with his construction so that it would be safe against the winter. As to the fishermen in general—the fishermen scorned Legère with icy contempt, some of them with downright hatred. But the matter of a dollar worked wonders here.

And to all this Legère turned a front as passionless as the sheer front of a granite cliff. He walked alone and gathered strength for what was to come. For a new life motive had replaced the old. At the bottom now was Saul Budro.

St. Anne's was to be developed, yes. But no longer for the glory of God, and the memory of his

father, but solely because thereby he could wreck Budro. He could have killed Saul now, all right, but he had learned, from bitterest experience, that mere death might be a boon, whereas the wrecking of one's life, of one's dear plans, might be the acme of torture, and it was this that he was to bring to Budro—it was this that had now become the one end of his entire existence.

And thus it stood that building his cannery would be Legère's first movement against his arch enemy. And the beginning of October found him yet without sufficient money. He must make a killing of some sort, and soon, and for a way thereof he searched his very soul.

And then his great scheme dawned upon Legère. Thiswise it came to him: line fishing was practically done. He had noted the herring still off shore, but of a larger size than in the spring and summer.

They were the sort that, down coast, were taken in vast quantities, salted and smoked, then skinned and boned and shipped all over the world. Then—in a flash—the scheme: Why not do this business right here in St. Anne's?

The thing showed dazzling possibilities in a moment. Legère sought Robertson.

Robertson was still on the North Coast. He had been to other points up shore and just returned to St. Anne's. He appeared curiously interested in Legère's proposition at once.

"This is odd, Legère," he said. "It may interest you to know that that very proposition was one of the things I was to look into while here. We already do that business quite extensively in a few herring locations down coast. But it is not possible for St. Anne's for this fall."

He was smiling considerably at the other's inexperience. "The fish are here, yes—but no smoking

facilities, and none for working up the cured stock later."

"Listen, m'sieu'," Legère had said, "I am not given to dreams. The fish are ready to-day; I will promise to convert every fish stand on the shore into a smoker, at once. To cure takes three weeks; in three weeks I will promise to deliver to you any amount of cured herring you may say, at a price so that your firm may manufacture them far cheaper than elsewhere.

"My part ends here. Over your store buildings are great lofts. Put in stoves and benches for the finishing work—they will house a hundred women and girls if need be. Your part begins there."

Robertson caught fire from Legère's enthusiasm. So much so that the very next day he ran down shore to St. Etienne, where there was a bank, wired his house, and made the necessary arrangements.

On his return he went straight to Legère. The day had given him time to reflect.

"You're quite certain you can back me up in this deal, are you? You see, old man, I'm going into this on you to a certain extent, because," smilingly, "I want to help you!" Robertson's eyes glimmered earnestly with his admiration and friendship.

Legère's face was grave with a solemn, unchangeable gravity. "It would be better not to consider me, David Legère, in it. Only my word. I will do as I say in the time agreed. There is nothing else to think of, m'sieu'."

Robertson was regarding him oddly. Along with his frank liking for Legère, was the forbearance, the leniency one extends to the very inexperienced, the very young. And now this was tinged with a sorrowful feeling almost of pity.

"Say, old man," he said gently, "do you really believe you're going to get away with all that life-carving, soul-scalping stuff? Do you really expect

to grab off just what *you* want from this little game of life and not put anything in?"

"I am quite content with the progress I have made."

"But, great God, man! Think of the price you pay! Who wants to go through life with every man's hand against him? And, having done so, what is there at the end?"

Suddenly Robertson's face went curiously earnest. "You say you're putting over what you set out to do," he said gently, "but tell me honestly, Legère, are you glad or—sorry?"

An odd shadow, strangely mournful, had crept athwart Legère's face. There followed a long, quiet moment and: "How can I tell, m'sieu'? Sorrow and gladness are two of the things I no longer know."

Robertson broke the dead silence a moment later. "All right," he said steadily. "Now listen here: I'm going to make a little prophecy that some time you'll remember. This lone-wolf stuff of yours isn't sensible, isn't human; and *it will get you in the end!*"

Legère watched the other striding off. There had been times lately when he had come to himself with his very soul devastated with loneliness—of place, of aims. Loneliness was not a matter of thinking or not thinking; it was something that lay underneath both, and at times he grew sick at heart with the terrible yearning call of his whole being for a place among his kind once more.

But always he fought it down. He had set out to do certain things—there was nothing left but to keep on. He gazed after Robertson steadily, with the fatalistic gaze of a man who had deliberately chosen a road that would lead—he knew not where. Just how was it going to "get him" in the end, he wondered. Long after he was to know.

Before supper that night Legère had bargained for

extra seines and men to run them; he had visited every fish stand on the shore and arranged to convert them into smokers. He went home knowing he had done much to confound his enemy, Saul Budro. For the first time, now, he felt that he was surely winning out.

CHAPTER V

LOVE'S APPEAL

IN the grim course of the silent battle he was waging, Legère was halted one day, and for a moment his forces were thrown into confusion. The interruption came through Gracielle Dorion. Legère had forsaken love and faith, and set himself against both, and with Gracielle Dorion love came to make appeal.

She came down to the Legère house one evening just after supper. Gracielle had not seen Legère's mother for some time, and he could see that whatever her errand, it was forgotten for a moment in her ready, warm concern for his mother.

Margaret Legère had given up. That fact was something Legère could *not* forget from his mind, try as he might.

He greeted Gracielle quietly, and in a moment reached for his hat, to pass out. At the door Gracielle's voice came to him. "I will go with thee, David."

There was no longer anything of the shyness and perturbation of a great love in Gracielle's manner. She was very calm, with a serene frankness about her that did much to settle his awkward eagerness to get out and away.

Outside, she said, simply: "Let us go up to the *calvaire*, David, where you can look out upon the sea."

He glanced up toward the tall black cross against the evening sky. "I no longer go up there, Gracielle."

She was gazing at him, strangely. "Nevertheless, we will go, David. There are things I must say."

He looked away. "No, Graciette. It is not worth while!"

"To me it is, my friend. And I have the feeling it will be the only time we shall ever talk together. Come."

Her hand was on his arm. He was moving off with her. But already the new watchdogs of his consciousness were rearing their heads warily.

They sat a moment in silence. There was a soft tranquillity in the evening about them. The sea and sky was a bourne of soft grays, of slate, of dove-color. Then:

"What I am to say to thee, my David, perchance woman has never said to man before." There was a moment in which her eyes sought the far, indistinct blending of sea and sky. Then: "This is it: That I have loved thee all my life with a love past all understanding; that it has been a love that brought happiness into my life as a little child; that brought the blessed solace of dreams to me as a young girl; that has brought me, not happiness, but fulfillment, as a woman."

A soft, silent moment, then: "I want first to impress upon you, David, the greatness of this my love, so I tell it you again, and in a way you'll understand; that it was a greater love than thy love for Justine Ducharme!"

She felt the violent start in his body beside hers, but she kept on. "For this is the measure of its greatness over thine. That my love for thee, although fruitless even as thine, has made me even more tender and compassionate toward life and all it means; while thine has set thee bitterly against all life here and hereafter. The outcome of thy love would doubtless bring thee to even kill thy loved one; while the outcome of mine has driven me to seek

my loved one out so that I might perchance be of help to him. And surely thou knowest, my David, that I have done this only at great cost—cost above all women."

The man beside her was all afire, and in one instant. With one touch she had ripped wide the sealed doors of his inner consciousness, and he could not force them shut. He was all aflame with the things of recollection; he was seeing a score of scenes all over again.

"I am going to speak on to the end, David. And first I say to you truly that it could not be possible for us to be aught to each other—you and I—even if you desired it. My love is greater even than that, knowing that your own is fixed fast forever.

"And so, having shown you the height and depth and sacrifice of my love, this is what I have come to ask of thee, my David—and if you can answer, save in the way of truth, I am silent forever. She turned and looked with infinite compassion into the eyes set straight ahead. "Whence is love, David? Who ordained it? For why?"

A long moment. The man's head had fallen into his hands. His fingers were clutched in his hair. He never moved. Soon, he had control again.

Graciette had looked away to the soft pulsing of the sea. "At first it frightened me terribly to know you had set yourself aside from your faith. I could not bear to think of it, and I could not stop." A little silence, then, "I suffered then, my David. It seemed then as if my love would kill me. But I found peace and solace where you would not. And, oh, my David, I know so well how hard life can be alone and unsustained." A moment's silence. "And so—can you think then on love and all it means, David—the love of thy father, thy mother, thy priest—all these thy people, and—still do as you are doing?"

He had risen and marched away a few paces. But now he was himself again, iron-handed in his control. Then: "It is quite useless, Gracielle. Things that were a part of me are quite gone. It is as though you were seeking to grow flowers where there is no soil."

"That is not true, David. It is that you will not permit them." She swept a hand out over the gentle glory of sea and sky, the dim slopes and wooded hills. "Oh, David, can you think on all this, and not be moved?"

She turned. "All things in nature, my David, cry out as to the cause of their being. 'It is the Lord, the Lord God!' they say. Can you think of that and not—"

"I no longer think, Gracielle, save on the things I will." He was ill at ease. He wished to get away. He hastened to forestall anything further, by: "What are you going to do, without Felix?"

She ignored his question. She was gazing at him evenly with clear, earnest eyes. "Is there nothing you will say, David?"

He shook his head. "Nothing."

Her eyes faltered away again to the things of sea and sky. Her voice came from far away. "I have shown you the inmost shrine of a woman's soul, David. I can do no more."

Passing down the slope, she replied to his question. "I hardly know what I am to do, David. But I know a way will open!"

In a flash a way came to him. It had to do with the work offered by the new herring venture. The idea bordered on softness in him, so he did not speak of it. But he spoke of it to Robertson later.

CHAPTER VI

A PARTY FOR GRACIETTE

LEGÈRE'S scheme for the manufacture of cured herring worked. In the cool fall days that followed, St. Anne's became vivid with life, with color, with activity.

The hills and slopes were lovely just then in the gorgeous passing of the bright, warm autumn. Red blueberry vines, red from brightest flame to deepest crimson, laid down a carpet of fire in the opens. It ran riot along the hillsides up back of the village and streamed away valiantly into the forest itself.

On the steep, wooded slopes, twinkling yellow flurries of slender birches and poplars brightened the somber melancholy of spruces and firs—spangling the massive background daintily with splashes of feathery gold. Down nearer the sea, mountain ash jeweled the rocky banks and pigeon berries gleamed redly in the hollows.

The sea in front was a scene of constant and frenzied activity. Sometimes near, sometimes far, the seiners swept across the surface on the course of their invisible webs; or, gathered into knots, delved fiercely into the sea, toiling prodigiously.

Off shore, activity held sometimes far into the night. At such times the flaming kerosene-soaked, cotton-batting torches of the seiners would be dotting the black distance fantastically like a moving line of glimmering will-o'-the-wisps.

The very first morning Legère had been off at daybreak to run his seines, and had met with huge success. His run that first day entirely filled the

pickling vats of one of the hurriedly reconstructed stands, and he was equally successful the next and the next. And while the catch lay its three days or more in brine, every building along the shore that could be converted into a smokehouse resounded with the echoes of hurried carpentry.

By the end of the first week the first of the cure was "strung," dried off, and packed densely in the houses, and the first "smokes" had been lit. And still Legère's wonderful success off there on the sea held; still his boats came sagging in with gunwale loads; still he forced room for more and more; still, even, the weather held propitious. Everything came his way.

Tod Robertson smiled as he marked the extent of the cure. Legère's boat was his own; he hired two other boats, and the men he paid well, but the fish themselves cost him nothing.

Robertson knew that he would stop fishing only when the last cent appropriated had been expended. For himself, Tod realized that the Gowdy, Doan & Robertson herring venture in St. Anne's was going to cost a pretty penny, but it held, nevertheless, a safe chance of good profit.

In the preliminary work of "stringing," almost every woman and child in the village had been brought into willing service. It was then that Legère had spoken to Robertson about Gracielle Dorion; as to his motive in so doing, Legère would not think.

Up to now, Robertson had never coupled Gracielle with Legère in his thoughts, and he experienced a swift little flash of surprise, of wonderment, that Legère should so interest himself, but he hastened to conceal it. He, himself, had been wearing Gracielle Dorion in his thoughts almost constantly, and Legère's quiet mention of her fixed his interest at once.

Legère had asked him if he intended working up

any of the finished cure in St. Anne's, and he had replied: "I had not decided as to that. Why do you ask?"

"It seems many of our women could be taught to do the work here," Legère had remarked quietly. "If that should be true, it might mean great help to one, Gracielle Dorion. Her father, as you know, has left St. Anne's."

They stared at each other a quiet moment. Neither knew of the other's interest in the girl. Then Robertson had said: "I think it might be done. And I will remember about Mademoiselle Dorion."

Tod Robertson had allowed his attraction toward Gracielle Dorion to develop sensibly—naturally. It was very hard at times, but he had clung sturdily to his first resolve. And now he had decided on his final course of action.

He was soon to return to Halifax. He would make the matter of a few weeks' absence, not coercing himself in any way, the absolute test of his compelling attraction toward Gracielle. He knew beforehand that it would not be necessary, but he determined to give the situation that one chance.

Uninfluenced by her presence, he could study out the points of their possible future, calmly, dispassionately. Until then, he promised himself on honor that he would not speak.

Meanwhile, he had fallen into the habit of seeing Gracielle, or trying to, two or three times a week. He loved being with her. There was something so steady in the gentle sweetness of her character, something so brave in her absolute honesty of thought, that it never failed to start the trend of his own mind toward cleaner, fresher channels. It was a surprising and pleasing evidence of how things stood with him.

Late one afternoon, he left the store and passed on

around the cove to the other end of the village and the house of Felix Dorion. Things were moving swiftly in St. Anne's—swiftly, and for him, strenuously. He was tired. By the end of the day he was tired of the endless supervision, of the figures, of the reek of fish and the smell of smoke—of his constant contact with the men.

He wanted something different—in fact, he wanted Gracielle Dorion, wanted the relaxing homelikeness of her immaculate little kitchen, wanted to watch her make tea—tea which in St. Anne's began and ended all things gastronomic.

Gracielle rose as usual to meet him and to offer a chair. But for a moment he forgot the kitchen, and the tea. There was something about the girl herself that distracted him. She looked little and white, somehow, and very, very tired.

"What's the matter, little girl?" he asked, scrutinizing her sharply.

"It is nothing, monsieur." She was making a brave effort to smile, unconcernedly. "I have been sewing, for Madame Comeau, and perhaps I have hurried overmuch. It is nothing."

Robertson had studied her carefully, and now was taking off his coat, brusquely. "Yes, it is, too, something," he was muttering. "Here"—he took the pile of sewing and tossed it aside—"pass this stuff up for a while. I'm going out to make you some tea—a real brew." He started for the door.

"Please, monsieur!" There was a poignant something about it that halted him sharply. She was regarding him with round, wide eyes of wistful anxiety. "I do not need it, monsieur, I—I shall do very well. Please——"

"Nothing to it!" he jerked out, decisively, and was gone. Out in the kitchen he began rummaging round in the cupboard perplexedly.

Behind him, the girl stood in the doorway twisting

her fingers wretchedly. Robertson spoke over his shoulder. "Where do you keep the tea, now? The caddy's empty." He flipped open a lid. "And your bread box. Why, what—?"

"There is no tea, monsieur."

He wheeled. "But the bread—" Something was tugging at his memory—*Legère*; his speaking of work for Graciette.

The girl had turned away into the other room. Robertson stepped after her swiftly. She was standing in confused uncertainty by the table.

"Say, little girl," he began, in low, husky-toned awe, "do you mean to say that you *haven't* any bread, any supplies—that—that you've been going *without* things?"

She nodded her head. "Just for a day or so, m'sieu'. It is nothing. When I finish for Madame Comeau—you see? Madame Comeau—all—have been kindness. You see?" She was smiling wanly. "It is quite simple—"

"Simple—hell!" Staring into the brave little face with its pathetically thinning cheeks, there had come a great lump in Robertson's throat. He snatched at his coat and wrestled himself into it.

"God!" he ejaculated to himself. "In a civilized country, too!" He snatched at his cap, and turned in the doorway. "Now, listen to me! You just be *simple* enough to stick in that chair until I come back, do you hear? And don't you stir!"

In fifteen minutes he was back. He was laden down like a delivery man, and he stalked grimly on by the miserable Graciette, on out into the kitchen, dumped his armload on the kitchen table and began unloading his every pocket.

Suddenly the girl was beside him. She put a pleading hand on his arm. "Oh, monsieur, I cannot let you do all this for me. Please—please do not think of it!"

He turned and grasped both her hands in his. "Listen," he said, suddenly sober, suddenly grave. "When I think of you—you going without actual food—" He shook his head in dead earnestness. "Say, little girl, it does things to me. I want to go out and beat up the world—and—and roar—and gnash my teeth—and lash my tail!"

Robertson's mood just then was bordering perilously on absolute self-revealment. He stopped, and looked at her tenderly a long moment, then: "Here, you sit here," he said, placing her a chair, "and watch your uncle negotiate a layout."

He turned to the table. To relieve the tension his mood now became extravagantly gay. He assumed a bantering tone, and the suave manner of a conjuror.

"We have here, ladies and gentlemen, a simple little cylinder of tin—with a bum label," he added, half to himself. "From this little cylinder, ladies and gentlemen, I propose to produce before your very eyes a nourishing little platter of soup."

He unwrapped another package. "This, ladies and gentlemen, with the kindly coöperation of some hen fruit in the paper bag on my right, I propose to render into a unique and tasty proposition of bacon and eggs—when well performed, it is a very pretty trick, ladies and gentlemen. From this"—untangling a square package—"with your kind attention I shall fill an entire dish with fancy biscuits; and this—Do I hear applause?" He listened a moment in mock silence. "This is to represent dessert."

It was a box of chocolates, a tawdry little box with a cheap yellow ribbon, but to his audience of one, an unaccustomed delight. Robertson peeled up his cuffs. "Now watch me closely, ladies and gentlemen."

He worked deftly in a man's broad-gauge way of doing such things. Finally, with the top of his

stove giving forth appetizing odors, he turned to the table. He seemed to have forgotten nothing; among his parcels were tea and bread and butter—complete provender for many meals.

Graciette sat and watched it all in pained, uncomfortable silence. He would not let her help. In her heart the miserable feeling of shame was fast giving way to an intense adoration of such kindness.

She looked almost sadly into Robertson's eyes as he set her smoking soup before her. "You have a wonderful kind heart, monsieur. I know God will reward you."

"That's all right, little girl. Meanwhile, eat your soup."

A moment later she eyed the plate of bacon and its burden of three eggs, all for her. "Oh, monsieur," she raised her hands deprecatingly. "I never could eat so much, never!"

"Well, see how near you can come to it," Robertson advised gruffly.

When it came to the magic box of sweets, Graciette frankly showed her pleasure. "Do you know, monsieur, I have never eaten chocolates since I was a little girl back in Montreal. I can just remember my father—my own father. He would bring them for my mother and me. It is sad, is it not"—reflectively—"that a child should recall a dear parent only as he meant sweets or toys?"

Robertson had moved back, and was watching her. He began speaking abruptly, ignoring her remark. "The more I know you, the more I'm convinced that sometimes life yields the touch of a rotten bungler."

Graciette was staring straight ahead. "Have you ever thought, monsieur, that there are lives designed all the way through to fall short of achievement?" A little pause. "Perhaps it may be for the good of

the many in some way or other, for God Himself makes no mistakes, but there seem to be people who are destined to try and try, always, to fill some worthy place among their kind, and—who *die trying.*"

Robertson was uncomfortably touched; he couldn't stand it. "No, I haven't thought of it," he replied. "And don't you?" A moment, then: "Now *I'm* going to talk a little. What are you going to do?" bluntly. "How are you going to get along—for a few weeks? After that, you won't have to worry," he added to himself.

She looked a little startled, a little tired. "Oh, I shall do very well, monsieur. Madame Comeau has sent me sewing, and after that—"

"Listen," he broke in. "I'm going to stack this place so full of grub that you can't see out of it—and that's that!" His eyes shone.

"No! Pardon, monsieur! But you cannot! Must not!"

"But I'm going to!" determinedly.

She stared at him. There were many things in her face. Strongest among them was a doglike gratitude. She wanted to stretch forth her hand and touch his own, in the thankfulness of her heart. But she looked up tearfully and said: "You are so good to me, monsieur, that it makes my heart ache terribly. For I can never do anything to repay."

Robertson almost committed himself as it was. "You're going to do many things for me, some time—if you only knew it."

"No, monsieur, never! That is one of the things I was thinking about myself when I spoke of the thwarted life—thwarted in all things, even gratitude." He was staring, without understanding her. "And—about the food," she gazed at him, clearly, "that would not be possible; don't you see the vil-

lage would not understand, and—and I know you would not wish to make me so wretched."

He brooded a quiet moment. Then: "I suppose that's true enough, but there are other ways for me to help." He was thinking again of Legère and his mention of Graciette. "There is a way you can earn your own living simply enough—for a time," he added, cryptically.

"I have thought of trying to earn long since. But, meanwhile, there has come another way. I talked it over with Père André. I felt, monsieur"—Graciette's eyes wandered far—"that I would like to give myself to God—to take the vows. Then would come many openings for work I should be glad to do—mercy work, teaching work, sickness work."

She turned back to smile at him, wistfully. "We even learned of a possible opening for me at Tracadie, the lazaretto on the New Brunswick shore." She was shaking her head, slowly, earnestly. "I would be willing to do even that. *There*, in that place," she smiled, wistfully, "I might be of real help at last."

"What is it?" inquiringly. "I've been in the States so much, I'm in the dark about much of this country up here."

"It is the leper colony, monsieur. It is the only one on this continent. And of course it is not often they can get—"

He was on his feet, slowly, staring in fierce rebellion. "You?" he gasped. "A little soft thing like you?" He turned to pace the floor, agitatedly. "You'll never do a stunt like that with me alive! Ugh! And again ugh! And then some!" He finally came to a halt and wiped his forehead. "Now listen! What if it could be arranged for you to work, and more than maintain yourself, for a time, right here in St. Anne's?"

Only then did he realize the depth of her straits—

straits of poverty, of loneliness, of hopelessness. She had clasped her hands to hide their shaking. "Oh, monsieur, it would be like heaven!"

He told her of his plan for doing a branch of the herring work in St. Anne's. And she was rejoiced beyond all measure. She stood before him transfigured.

"Oh, monsieur, you do not know, you cannot tell how much it would mean to me to be able to stay here in St. Anne's." Tears of relief, of joy, were blinding her. "You are so good, monsieur. I would willingly die for you."

In the deep gratitude of her soul Gracielle meant it. She would now be near David Legère—to be near him was all that remained.

CHAPTER VII

THE MOTHER

ONE day, about this time, marked the passing of Margaret Legère. There came a morning when she did not get up. She died the next day.

Margaret Legère simply let go her hold on life. Watching her son day after day and feeling helplessly the iron impregnability of his heart, had borne constantly and heavily on the sources of her life. She wanted to go.

Père André came. He heard of it through one of the men who had gone to the Legère home to find Legère. And Gracielle Dorion came, quietly, sorrowfully, and smoothed out the tangled domestic affairs, and put the house in order.

No other women came to the house of the infidel. Here the faithful could retaliate, and straightway turned ferocious.

Toward dusk the woman had turned to her son, sitting by her bedside, stilled, immovable, like a great husk that might have been burned out. She spoke evenly, simply, and on her words faith came to make appeal.

"I hate to be leavin' ye, Davy, lad," she said. "It's a lonesome road for a man like you. I don't suppose now ye'd be willin' to jest say ye'd try again—try to git back your faith, your God, and your man's place in life?" There was a long, silent pause, then: "Would ye, Davy, lad?"

No answer from the great figure by the bed. Legère had fallen forward with his face in his hands. All his soul was desolate before a great empty loneliness.

The woman was speaking again in softest, gentlest pleading. "I'm goin' to be seein' your father, Davy, soon. I'd like to be tellin' him how all was right with ye—I'd like him to be proud of what I'd tried to make of ye—after *he* went."

Stillness again.

"As it is, Davy, lad, I—I—don't see jest how—jest how I'm goin' to face him; and—oh, I'd been longin' fer it so—longin' and prayin' that—that when the time come—and I should see him—" The softly stumbling voice seemed swallowed up in its clouding apprehension.

A low, strangled, tearing cry came from Legère's throat. "Oh, mahm," he cried in the tender manner of his little boyhood, "it's all gone, and the place where it was is all empty! I'd be willing to die if I could only tell you different, but I can't lie to you—I can't—I can't, because soon you'd know!"

The eyes of the woman on the bed had closed slowly. "Ye can tell me ye'd try, son. That's all I'm askin'. I'd like to know ye'd always be doin' your duty, that ye'd never be desertin' one of God's creatures when they needed ye. I'd like to know—" Père André and his little aide came in from the kitchen. The woman sensed their coming. "Ask him," she murmured, feebly, "to tell me—that he'll try—before I go."

The priest sat down and pressed the woman's hand. All through his sorrowing office of prayers, he was conscious of the great human creature that held unchangeable throughout the period of sacredness and devotion, with the chilling immobility of a half embedded rock.

Then came silence and waiting.

The somber eyes of the priest were bent on the knotted figure of the man like scorching coals in the intensity of their waiting. Every fiber of his body, every impulse of his mind was bent to the one thing;

it seemed the very stream of his life itself was being sent forth to beat upon the other in a flood of overwhelming exhortation. He waited for the son to make some sign. And waiting, prayed, from his soul.

Across the bed, the girl was kneeling on the floor. She, too, had prayed, constantly. Her uplifted face had a divine quality about it. And she, too, stilled in her prayers, was waiting—waiting with a growing awe at the continued silence.

The knotted figure strove continuously with his clenched hands; the veins on his temples stood forth like tangled cords, his face began to drip water. The girl's lips moved on, although a white, despairing fear was stealing across her face. The priest watched, unceasingly. Then:

Out in the kitchen, a wet stick snapped softly in the stove. It sent up a sibilant little rocket of hissing.

The tiny sound threaded in through the dead silence with the shattering impulse of a bomb. The terrible tenseness was broken.

The eyes of the three turned quickly to the face on the pillow. The woman on the bed had ceased to breathe. Margaret Legère had gone along down the road on which there is no return.

CHAPTER VIII

BUDRO BECOMES ALARMED

S AUL BUDRO had begun to cast uneasy glances across the cove to the fish stand of David Legère—the crude, uncouth structure that stuck to the rocky shore over by Legère's house compactly, like a great brown heron's nest. For Saul had finally dragged himself forth from enforced seclusion and started things going again with a bang.

True, he was not the old Saul—his huge, stocky bulk was broken somehow, and he walked oddly, like a crab. But Saul's spirit was intact and, now, fuller of battle than ever—and things over by Legère's began to worry him.

He had learned of the fish buying, and that Legère had made money on it. And then the herring activities. Saul knew what they meant. If, after all, Legère should ever get together his one, sole, single cannery, it would mean certain extinction for one Saul Budro. So now, more than ever, was Saul bitten by fear and worry.

One day Saul had jerked his great bulk out upon the end of his wharf. It commanded a view of all the cove. He sat in the sun. And then, before he had much more than taken out his pipe, his whole attention became fixed, set, with the baleful intentness of a snake.

Across the cove strange things were going on on the shore site below the old Legère place. A colony of men, like ants, were operating busily on the beach running down from the fish stand of David Legère.

Little knots were burrowing antlike into the rocky shale, starting excavations for piles; others, still antlike, were fastening upon imbedded rocks and boulders and dragging them about; others still—antlike still—fastened upon great logs up beyond the tide mark and were tugging, yanking, pulling and carrying them down the beach. Plainly recognizable among the inferior ants, loomed the great stalwart figure of the boss, overseeing everything at once.

Something like a knell came coldly into being in Saul Budro's heart. He knew the preparations to be actually under way for an extensive wharf—the big pile of lumber, landed while he was interned—to be designed for an extensive building; and now, he noted the great black iron stack which would some time cap a boiler.

Saul Budro knew intuitively what all these things were to be for. And something told him his hour had struck.

With sullen fires beginning to glow within him, he watched. The damned Frenchmen! Look at them, leaping obsequiously about at this man's curt bidding, when in reality they hated him, scorned him, loathed him, and would grill his everlasting soul over hell coals forever, for a heretic.

And the man himself! The fires in Budro leaped to flames. He had never forgotten the man—never could, now. His mind might, but his body wouldn't let it.

Saul couldn't sit. He got up and lurched impotently about. While he had been watching, a boat had landed from the schooner that had made into the harbor the night before. He was conscious that one of the men left behind to make her fast, had loitered up the beach and was sitting hunched on a log just along from the Budro wharf. And this man also was watching the distant Legère operation.

The vessel must have brought the iron stack and probably some of the lumber. This man might know something. Saul lurched up the wharf and stumbled down upon the beach.

Somehow Saul sensed the hatred in the man watching Legère, as soon as he came near him. The man's crafty, unshaven face might have been thinking Budro's own thoughts. Budro spoke peremptorily, as was his wont. "Did you bring in that stack and material over there?"

The man looked up surlily, but his surliness vanished when he saw who it was. "Yes, sir. Some of it."

"Any more off aboard?"

"Yes. A boiler."

"What's the place going to be—do you know?"

"A sardine cannery." The man's shoulders hunched down sullenly. "I hope the first fire in the boiler blows its owner to hell!" he observed, acidly.

Saul started and began staring. "Why?"

"Oh, I dunno. I don't like him. I hate him like hell." The man's hands crept absently to his throat.

Saul Budro was appraising keenly the flat, weak face, and crafty, shallow eyes. Then: "What's your name?"

"Sleeth."

Saul nodded. "So—so?" he remarked. "I've heard of you. All right, let's talk."

He sat down on the log.

CHAPTER IX

L'OS MORT

GRACIETTE DORION had been rising early, putting her home in order and—going to work.

The swift-planned work quarters which Legère had outlined to Robertson for the skinning and boning of the herring cure had become a reality. The great lofts over the Gowdy, Doan & Robertson stores had undergone a hurried transformation. Two stoves had been set up in the big main loft, for already the mornings were beginning to come quite cool; work benches had been roughly constructed along the four walls, and already the place was humming like a beehive with activity.

The cure had turned out a marvel of perfection. The heavy runs of herring had been of a quality and condition ideal—not over large, nor over fat; solid, and firm-meated. They had taken salt to perfection; they “strung” with scarcely any gill breakage—no loss; they had “smoked” into a hard, firm cure; by no means oily, they showed, when skinned, a ribbon of gleaming silver down each bronzed flank.

They were brought from the houses in great, crisp heaps of wonderful bronze and gold. In the cool of the early morning before the women had taken their places, they lay on the benches along the white-washed walls in great, dull-glimmering heaps, as of strange, ancient riches—flat tones of amber, and high-lights of brass; glints of gold like a goldsmith’s platen; glimmer of copper and tinge of bronze—the red-gold bronze of the vivid undermetal.

Gracielle had been quite enraptured with it all from the start. She was in charge of the work. She had learned very rapidly. Her deftness and ready comprehension had stood her well in a work that was wholly new to her, and Robertson had set her to teach the others.

On a cool morning in October, Gracielle had arrived at the loft early. She had not slept. She had been up long before dawn, had put her house in order, and now sat waiting. A couple of days ago she had run a fish bone under her nail, and it had become very painful.

Gracielle sat by the stove, getting warm. Old Guite, who built the fires and brought in the work, was bubbling on endlessly while pushing his broom about the floor. Gracielle shivered occasionally. Old Guite sweeping around the stove noted her bandaged finger.

“*Ou, là, mamselle,*” he crooned pityingly. “Fish bones are bad! It is I that know! And of such a painfulness, such a misery. Now,” he bent over her hand, critically, “take a good strip of fat pork, mamselle, and cover it thick with pepper, and tie on tight, and—pst!—all is gone!”

The women began to come, bustling and chattering like guinea hens. They donned their coarse aprons, and the places at the benches filled up. Mme. Flavie Boudreau, the little Tamant’s wife, occupied a place of vantage near the center of one side. Mme. Flavie consented to lend her presence to the new work only when she saw practically half the women of the village at it—and later, saw the first pay envelopes.

Gracielle passed slowly down the line inspecting the work—seeing that the skin from the two halves of the fish was peeled off to the uttermost speck, and the halves then trimmed of waste and adhering bones to an attractive neatness. The women loved

Gracielle—a large statement to make about women of a woman—but the eternal sweetness and consideration of Gracielle could never attract anything but love.

Mme. Flavie was one of the “packers” who packed the finished product in neat wooden boxes lined with heavy waxed paper. With shrewd selection, Gracielle, who knew the tall grenadier’s rigorous house-keeping, had selected her and the Widow Saulnier for this important work.

Now, Mme. Flavie remarked the white linen on Gracielle’s finger. “*Mon Dieu, chérie*, how thy finger is swollen! But they are terrible—fish bones! Come home with me this noon, *p’tite*. I will make thee a nice poultice of bread and milk. That will draw it all out.”

At the noon hour, though, Gracielle thanked her kindly. She smiled and shook her head. “It will be quite all right, Mme. Flavie. I shall not go home this noon. I will sit here by the stove and get warm.”

At the door, Mme. Flavie peered back over her shoulder, her face set forebodingly. “I like it not, *ma chère*,” she said to the Widow Saulnier. “My old father was given to say that a fish bone imbedded was like to be *l’os mort*—a death bone!”

All through the afternoon Gracielle seemed working in a haze of fiery vapor. And at the same time she seemed cold—shivering. She was very tired, too, and her thoughts seemed most unaccountable in the things they followed.

For instance, she thought constantly of David Legère. She had never before allowed herself to think of David Legère—that is, save to pray for him always. All the dear thoughts that, in the beginning, had drifted constantly through her mind like the incense from flowers, she had suppressed, rigorously.

She felt it being unfair to that other woman—a poaching as it were; thievery, if you will.

Now the rigid guardian of her mind was strangely lax, strangely fitful, and she found her thoughts pouring out and around David Legère with helpless lavishness. She *wanted* him. She was so terribly lonely. Life held so little after all without love. And thereupon her mind would be seeing him, his figure, his face, his eyes and his hair, in a thousand paining little intimacies.

At six that night, big Jean, the boss from the sheds, spoke to her kindly. "It must be that you have taken cold, mamselle. Your face is flushed. And your hands—if it is a bone sore, it is well to be very careful. Take some peppers from the bottle of pepper sauce and bind on overnight. They always draw the pain."

Graciette felt oddly strange when she reached home.

Next day she was not at work.

CHAPTER X

THE DRY BLOW

WAR—grim, sinister war, was openly on between Saul Budro at one side of the cove, and David Legère at the other. It became a recognized thing in St. Anne's.

As the days went by, the entire life of the village seemed to hang upon it.

The war between the two men themselves was a war of deathless hatred and hostility, of one man against another. Besides this, there was the conflict between their respective aims, which was of far deeper significance, touching as it did the welfare of others. But there was a third warfare going on in which both were pitted against an adversary that was common to both—the passing of time, and the coming of winter.

Since his knockout, Budro had been hampered constantly. His master planner, Desmond, had decamped hurriedly in the famous dénouement. A hurried, secret command from Halifax had recalled him away from trouble—Gowdy, Doan & Robertson could not risk having their connection with affairs known.

Saul's builder also had returned down shore. So work on the construction lagged, until Saul could get about again himself. Then, to reorganize his crew took time. Saul had lost several weeks.

As things were now he could get no farther than completing the substructure before cold weather made building impossible. But toward this much, Saul bent every impulse of his soul.

Legère? Since he started, Legère had gone steadily on. He had passed relentlessly over, into, through all difficulties. To the men of the village The Infidel might be a grossly evil thing among men—but he certainly was a good fighter, and the man does not live who does not reverence that last, no matter how deeply he may conceal it.

Besides, Legère paid well. And he hired every man he could crowd on the job without retarding things. And his wharf was going up, was about completed, in fact. And the cement foundation for his upright boiler was soon to be laid, and after the setting of his boiler and the cement work for his tanks was in, he did not fear so much the advent of freezing weather. By then the bulk of the heavy work would be completed, and the rest could be done before snow fell, or before the herring struck in the spring.

And now Budro was beginning to see certain handwriting on the wall. If Legère's building should be continued to completion, Saul knew that he would find a way to finance his first pack; St. Anne's would boom, and Saul would be hunted out of the coast like a wharf rat driven by the tide. And this new contraband of liquor, and its thrilling growth, and the money in it—gold mines!—Saul Budro would willingly have bartered his soul for some way out.

Any actual interference was out of the question. No man tampered with David Legère nowadays, not even Saul. Saul's talk with Sleeth a while back had held possibilities, but Sleeth had run on down the coast to return later, and until he came back—

It was that very week the weather broke, and broke bad. There came a night when every sign of rotten weather known to the men of St. Anne's seemed to be set. And in the morning the coast was a raging battle line of battering seas. Then

set in a "dry blow," the bugaboo of many seacoasts, when the wind raged up and down the shore in a fury wholly demoniac.

All through the day Saul Budro sat secure in the lee of his place across the cove, and gloated. His own wharf construction the wind would not stir, nor would it harm Legère's. But Legère's half-completed building—

Saul watched Legère's new stack, but half guyed the day before, go down with a toppling bang, strike across the edge of the wharf and buckle into an inverted V. He saw the wind rip off little flurries of shingles and unsecured boards, and snatch them sailing, wildly, crazily, through the air to land lightly far back from the shore, and blew on in erratic skips and hops. And he saw—

A great, roaring blast came, that filled the cove as it might a bowl on its side. The half-boarded sides of Legère's building buckled and bulged. The roof rose majestically, folded back on itself, and a great fragment crashed to the beach and went careering away, over and over, to fall flat, and skid grindingly up the rocks. What was left of the building structure crumpled feebly up, and ever and anon fed the gale with choice fragments.

Saul Budro rocked in frenzy of joy.

And then, from his vantage point directly across, Saul saw something else—something that could be seen by his eyes alone, something that stayed in his mind to the day of his death. In the tenseness of his gaze across the cove he became conscious of a sudden change in the customary aspect of things—a swift, tiny change, somehow, in the black skyline against the dead gray.

And then it struck Saul what it was. The tall cross on the headland, the weather-beaten symbol of the *calvaire* for years, had been broken off above the ground; he could make out the splintered stump.

Even the atrophied spirituality of Saul Budro was awed for a moment. It struck even Saul as an omen of ill.

And so it proved—in a way that no man could foretell.

Toward evening Saul saw the big figure of Legère making toward the wreck, when at length the blow was becoming spent. Legère stood alone and surveyed the ruin.

None of the villagers consoled with The Infidel in this his hour of desolation. To them, this was a direct visitation of the wrath of God. If one doubted—well, let him wait and see.

But one man came—Tod Robertson. He blew along, holding onto his cap, and leaped from shelter to shelter. He caught Legère's arm and drew him into the lee of one of his old sheds.

"I'm sorry, old man—damned sorry." He pressed the arm in his grasp in fervent sympathy. Then: "Have you got any money? I know about what all this stands you, and about how much you have made."

The Infidel shook his head. "No. I have no money, m'sieu'."

"Well, what are you going to do, then?"

"I know not. Only that I'm going on."

Something terrific suddenly flamed in Legère. He seized an old fragment of dried cod lying on a fallen hogshead. He gathered it into his long, powerful hand and held it out. The fingers gripped into it, steadily, unbelievably, until a little trickle of moisture dribbled out, before the awe-struck eyes of Robertson.

"I'm going to take life like that, m'sieu'," he blazed, "and I'm going to squeeze victory out of it—like that!"

Robertson's face might have been staring at the virile gods of old in his thrilled reverence. And

now his gambling instinct was aroused. "How much will it take to put all this back?"

"Nearly two thousand dollars, m'sieu'." Legère waited a moment, swallowing persistently in some powerful emotion. "If you mean that you will lend—I—I will pay you, if I live."

"I know that, all right." Robertson wheeled. "All right. Figure up and let me know."

"M'sieu'!" Legère was looking altogether strange in the gray light. He was holding out his hand. "I—I make, perchance, but a poor friend, m'sieu'. But—but—I thank you."

In that one moment of vast relief an impulse of mighty gratitude had sprung to life in the soul of Legère, and he had forced himself to act on it even before he should think.

Robertson had gripped the hand with instant fervor. He shook it powerfully, grasped tight in both his own. "That's all right, old man." A dead quiet exchange of glances, alive with things that could not be expressed, then: "I'll see you in the morning."

But next day Robertson had left St. Anne's.

CHAPTER XI

THE PROBATIONER

IT was just after dawn next morning that the Widow Saulnier knocked at her lodger's—Tod Robertson's—bedroom door. "A man to see you, m'sieu'."

Robertson was just dressing. He looked out into the little kitchen. A big, burly figure waited him. "Come in," he called out.

It was Jo Michelle. Jo shut the door behind him. "I have come for your help, m'sieu'," he began in careful French.

"For what?" Robertson eyed him curiously.

Jo's underjaw seemed to tremble. "For one who is very close to us both, m'sieu"—Graciette Dorion."

Robertson dropped a boot. "What is the matter with her?" His face showed suddenly startled—white.

"She is very sick. And she is all alone." Jo's burdened face fell to the cap that he was twisting nervously in great, shaking hands. "I have done what I could, m'sieu', but—but—I am frightened in my heart, and—I—I cannot think."

His face came up, mournful like a great dog's. "Your brain, m'sieu', is—is trained to think, always. It came to me that you would know what—what to do."

Robertson's hands, snatching at his boot laces, were trembling visibly. He finally managed to get dressed. By the door, the big messenger's eyes were wandering unseeingly over the array of silver dressing-table luxuries, glinting under the lamp on the old-fashioned bureau. Robertson spoke.

"Don't give up, old man." He ran a soft kerchief around his neck for a tie. "We'll do something."

Some emotion almost broke Jo Michelle. "I—I knew you would help, m'sieu'. I, Jo, would give my life! It would not help, but it is all I have. You—can give much more."

Out in the kitchen Robertson spoke swiftly to the Widow Saulnier. "Never mind the breakfast, madame. Mademoiselle Dorion is ill, and we are going there. Will you come, too, as soon as you can?"

Graciette Dorion lay on the old lounge in the little sitting room. She tried to sit up when she saw Robertson coming in, but he took her gently and forced her back. Her face was flushed. Her pupils were very large as though from pain. Robertson noted her swollen bandaged hand. "How did you do it?" he asked.

"A bone under the nail, monsieur—down at the shop." She closed her lids wearily. "Without doubt it will be all right, but I shiver, always, monsieur, and—" Her voice faded out to a weary sight. "Ah—the pain!"

"Where is the pain?" sharply.

Graciette's well hand traveled gropingly across her breast. "In my arm, my armpit, monsieur—and now here, and here." She touched her shoulder, her side.

Robertson's face had gone suddenly gray. He rose and went swiftly to Jo Michelle by the window.

"Jo," he said, "go to Narcisse Comeau. Tell him to hook up the horses to his express wagon and put a mattress in it, and put in plenty of robes. Tell him to drive up here, ready for a trip out. I want him, himself, understand!"

"M'sieu'!" Jo's face was working badly. "Down shore to St. Etienne is a doctor. Let me go, m'sieu'.

I can make it, and fetch him. M'sieu'—m'sieu'—let me go! I want to do *something*."

"No, Jo! He couldn't help much if you got him. I'm taking her out to the railroad—to a hospital—the best one along the irons! It's the only chance. Go, Jo!"

The man crumpled. "I knew it in my heart!" he muttered, and ran.

Mme. Saulnier had arrived and was taking her shawl off in the kitchen. Robertson stopped her.

"I am taking mademoiselle to a hospital, madame. Will you return home for food, and bring my grip, and pack in it mademoiselle's things that she will need? And will you hurry, please?"

The girl on the couch had risen and was staring wildly. "Oh, monsieur, I cannot let you do this thing. It—it—is—"

"Can't you?" he muttered between set jaws. "Tell me," firmly, "where will I find your warmest clothing?" The girl succumbed weakly.

Fifteen minutes and Narcisse Comeau, calm and efficient, wheeled his horses deftly at the Dorion door. In the little sitting room, as they prepared to lift her, Jo Michelle suddenly put them aside.

"M'sieu'—Narcisse—let me! It is all I can do."

They stood back. Jo bent over the couch and raised the little bundled figure to his breast. He stood one moment thus, his face upturned, his eyes closed. Then, with infinite tenderness he carried her out to the wagon.

He stood looking on while they tucked her in swiftly, silently. The horses started spiritedly. Mme. Saulnier, in a maze, followed on, absently, down the road. The team passed along the street and off up the road to the upper woods.

Jo Michelle turned on the door stone and reentered the house. The little place, now, might have been

a shrine with the holy presence removed, the light gone out.

Jo Michelle dropped to his knees in the center of the floor. The water from his eyes began dribbling hopelessly down his face. A little wool shawl lay on the table. The man groveled toward it on his knees, encircling it with his arms, and buried his face in its folds.

"Au revoir, my angel," he groaned, brokenly. "It is finished!"

It was thirty miles to Lacrosse—ten through the woods over a road that was scarcely more than a trail, and then twenty along the general direction of the coast. Narcisse Comeau negotiated the difficult woods road with the skill of a charioteer.

The journey out to the traveled road was made swiftly and silently, without incident. Robertson rode in back. He was disposing his own body so as to ease the girl; he would not let her talk.

At Lacrosse, the sole train for the day connecting with the main line for Quebec and Montreal, had gone. It was here that Narcisse proved his worth.

"There is another train on the main line, m'sieu', late this afternoon; it connects to get in to Quebec in the morning. The nearest station is Castleton. From here, it is forty miles. There are big lumber people here. They will have automobiles that m'sieu' might get. I will see."

A few minutes later Tod Robertson stood in the little general office of the lumber people telling his story, amid grave-faced attention. "I must make this trip," he finished. "If necessary I would be willing to *buy* the car."

"You won't have to do that." The manager, himself a young man, rose from his desk and gave a few concise orders over the phone. The car

arrived a few minutes later. It was a closed car of some distinction, with a chauffeur.

Whirling silently through the fall-denuded country, passing swiftly almost like the flight of a spirit, through a world constantly new, constantly different, Graciette Dorion was at times completely detached from her pain. In Narcisse's wagon, she had lain inert, deadened, with life, its hardness, its pain, hovering her broodingly.

But now, in this keen, spiritlike flying, she smiled wanly—she could not help it. When she was a little girl—little enough to be playing with dreams—she had reached the very acme of delight in visioning an automobile and herself in it; well—here it was!

She had never known much about automobiles, but, in her child's dreams, it was to be one of fineness and beauty. She looked now at the soft upholstery that lined this car luxuriously like a nest; she noted the crystal flower holder, the efficient speaking tube—ah, this must be the very vehicle of her dreams—surely nothing could be finer! She had played that there would be a chauffeur; well, there he was! And a young cavalier to be with her—oh, he was to be fine, handsome, noble—attentive to her every wish.

Tears filled her eyes. She reached out and startled young Robertson by touching his hand with her well one. Surely no one could ever have lived so kind as he.

He looked at her questioningly from his brooding eyes, and she told him her thoughts. She told them whimsically, even to the detail of her little girl's dream companion—they had been so vague, so poorly comprehended, but so wonderful, so enchanting always—and now it had all come true.

Her speech brought Robertson sharply out of his

gloomy thoughts. And now, all the things checked in him for hours—nay, days, weeks, came out. He began speaking, recklessly, with the headstrong disregard of youth. "Oh, why couldn't I have given all these things to you before!"

She had turned her head slowly toward the window. "That could not have been, monsieur," came to him, gently.

"Couldn't it! Couldn't it! It *could* have been, and it *should* have been. Listen, little Gracielle—I have been trying to be wise, trying to be straight, to be decent, and for your sake absolutely right about this thing, and I have only been—a fool!"

"No, monsieur—no!" Gracielle's face looking out of the window had settled into a grieved, expectant stillness.

"I knew from that first day when I held you—the day your father went away—that I loved you. You can't fool your real love things, Gracielle!"

"No—ah, no, monsieur!"

"And mine had sprung to life that day in a way to take my breath, to set me groggy—with just gladness—"

"Oh, monsieur! Please—"

"But I didn't have sense enough to go right back and tell you, then and there. I wanted to be so upright, and noble, and on the level about everything—"

"Please don't, monsieur. Please be—be kind."

"Kind?" He was clenching his hands together in abject self-abasement. "If I had taken you out of it, then, as I should have done, all this—" He swallowed a moment. "Oh, little kid, when a man sees some one he loves suffering—suffering poignantly and terribly—just beyond reach, just where he cannot help—why, it—it does things to him—terrible things, cruel things!"

Silence now from the girl at his side.

"I have thought of you every day——" He choked. He could not finish.

But she herself was finishing, in a little thoughtful voice, as if, indeed, she might have been reading his own mind. "On waking, perchance?" she was intimating. "On ending the day?" It came softly—but with gentle conviction, as though she herself had caught a breath from the dear field of reminiscence.

"Yes, that's it!" He caught at her suggestion. "And beautiful thoughts—inspiring thoughts—that—that——"

"Thoughts that brighten each day and hour, that make a steadfast radiance out of the future?"

"That's it!" he agreed. "You have it. And at times I have just *suffered* to march right up to your place, and just take you in my arms," fiercely, "and hold you!" He pressed the back of a hand vacantly to his forehead.

"Close?" came to him barely audible. "Close, and closer, until you forgot time and place, and knew only eternity?" The girl fell back, her face a calmly-tragic little white blur against the cushions.

"Ah-h!" he gasped. "You've known it all, little girl—you've got it all perfectly." His mood changed. He was back in the present, determined, invincible, with a man's fierce intensity of purpose. His hand fell and closed tight on hers.

"Well, I'm going to make good for all the time I've lost, for the fool I've been. And you're going to *have* all these things you've dreamed of, every last one!"

The little hand clutched his closer. "Monsieur, dear monsieur, I must speak. And, oh, it seems I would rather die than say to you what I must." She stopped a moment. "But I know in its every detail the way of love as you have told it—I have learned it all. But"—life grew hushed in the little

place—"but not through love for you, my dear, dear friend—ah, I thought you knew!—but for David Legère. And my heart is sealed."

Robertson sat very still. Life seemed dropping swiftly down within him, seemed falling low—like mercury in an ice-chilled tube. Outside, the world was running by dizzily; now sickeningly, in bewildering confusion. Then—

He felt her body suddenly tilt stiffly against his. He drove his own misery from him, and supported her. Her face was dead white. She was barely conscious. The pain was scathing her body like withering fire.

Robertson fumbled in his pocket. He gave her one of the tablets he had obtained from the doctor in Lacrosse.

In Castleton they got aboard the sleeper for Quebec. A nurse, secured by wire from Lacrosse, accompanied them. Robertson had also managed the drawing-room.

Gracielle lay on the couch. In the periods of drugged ease she noted gratefully all the wonders of luxurious travel that Robertson's thoughtfulness had secured—and again the things of young-girlhood dreams came drifting back.

Travel she had dreamed, travel in splendid luxury, although she hardly knew what that represented. Well, here it was! And her dreams had included a serving woman to anticipate her every wish, to undress her, to brush her hair. Somehow she had never pictured any serving woman as being like this serene, marvelously capable nurse—but here she was!

At night Gracielle looked at the glittering little tray of food. She did not wish to eat, but the dainty beauty of it—oh, her soul loved it! There was a single red carnation gleaming among the

silver like a great jewel. She wanted to cry at it all.

Her arm was terribly swollen.

In the evening Robertson spoke quietly to the nurse and for a moment she left them.

He knelt by the couch. Gracielle smiled, although she seemed to be doing it through the mind, through the features of some one else. The nurse had given her tablets regularly, and once a thrust of something in her arm.

The nurse had bent and kissed her tenderly after that last, as though in sudden abandon of profoundest pity. And then she had got up hurriedly, and turned away. And Gracielle—had *understood*.

Robertson knelt down and began with the frank, unrestrained emotion of a boy—one that suffered. “I have been in misery all day, little Gracielle. It’s—it’s been pretty bad! At first I—I thought I could not stand it. And then—I forgot everything but *you*, little girl, and the fact that you, too—in addition to all the other things life seems to have heaped on you—that you, too, had suffered in your love, as I was suffering. And it made me want to—to—” Robertson choked miserably.

“Oh, I’d willingly die for you, Gracielle!” In a moment he was calm. “But then, it came to me—I don’t want to hurt you, dear—but I know about Legère, and that he loved some one else. And that leaves me free to keep on loving you, to fight for you, *over* everything, *through* everything!”

“Oh monsieur,” she pleaded gratefully, “I thank you *so!*” She pressed the hand that held hers, and made answer with unwavering truth. “But even if I could say to you to hope, it would be—be quite useless now, *mon ami*. For now something else has drawn nigh to stand between us.”

“You mean?” Robertson’s threat was clutching

spasmodically. "You mean *this?*"—indicating her arm. He knelt closer. "It *can't* come between us, Graciette. I'm going to fight—fight till my last quiver of life is on the table—staked. And that is what I came to tell you." He pressed his lips to her face and got up.

"Oh, monsieur," she was murmuring. "How good God has been to let me know—such love! But—but—the thing stands waiting, monsieur!"

The nurse came in.

That night in a little white cubicle in the hospital, a nurse and an interne remonstrated gently, but uselessly, with a young man who sat in a grim, little, hard, white chair by the door and would not leave.

He had laid down his mandates in a hard, firm manner of iron. He wanted it understood that this patient was to receive every attention of treatment known to science, that if the hospital did not include such among its own facilities they were to procure it wherever it existed.

They listened gravely, courteously, noting rather the young man's own face—gray, haggard, seamed with deep lines—than the tenor of his remarks.

And now it was dusk. There was a smell of ether abroad in the air. The doctor was talking in a low tone with the nurse. The little patient in the bed was moaning in semiconsciousness.

By the door the man's mind wandered vaguely in its dead weariness—and he almost lost himself. The nurse was passing out. The doctor sending her for some one. Then she was back, and—

Robertson was stark upright, staring as a man might in a nightmare. The nurse was bringing an assistant in the person of a young probationer. They were standing before him. And the young probationer was Justine Ducharme.

CHAPTER XII

THE THING BETWEEN

IN a relieved interval of the silent night watches, Justine Ducharme had talked to Robertson, and in turn had listened, seated on a settee in the corridor just outside the little room. She explained briefly her own presence in Quebec, and in the hospital.

She had left St. Anne's the morning after Legère had learned the truth. One of her uncle's men had put her aboard the power schooner for up the coast. Her face grew very intense as she went over it all.

"I came back to Quebec, monsieur, but I have never returned to my people. It was necessary that I work. I should have died otherwise. I wished to work at something that would keep me occupied every hour of every day. And so I came here, and was taken on."

"And I *have* worked! And the good God has helped me!" She glanced at the gray, care-lined face listening stolidly on the seat beside her. And, for a brief instant, something she saw there diverted her. "You—you are suffering, monsieur."

He turned slowly to regard her out of hollow, burning eyes. They were all together in his mind—Gracielle, himself, this girl, and the poor wretch of a Legère. "Have you, too, then learned—about suffering?" he asked grimly.

Her face went even whiter, and her lids came slowly down over her eyes. "This, you could not have known, monsieur," came from her lips, "that

I loved David Legère, that I loved him with all my soul, that—that I love him now."

Robertson was dragged to attention in spite of himself. "But how could you do the thing you did?"

"I could not help myself. Fate had me bound, monsieur, bound hand and foot. And the only way I could save him was by getting him away. We were leaving that very day—when—when he was told of my part in it." Her hands knotted strivingly in her lap.

A flood of pitying tenderness came over her listener. He put a hand over hers. "Forgive me, mademoiselle. I am sorry." Then, as realization dawned on him: "If what you say is all true—God, how you must have suffered! And—poor Legère!"

Robertson was staring pensively straight ahead far down the dim corridor. "Ah, mademoiselle, what a force was ordained of love! For when it goes amiss"—his head settled wearily back—"when it is love in vain, it kills with a sureness stronger than death. You loved Legère—so did my little girl in there; I love *her*—so, I know now, did poor Jo Michelle. Legère loved you, and so did the man Lacasse; and all—all seem to have suffered of their love. Ah, God—what's the answer?"

In a moment she touched his hand. "Can you—will you tell me just a little word of *him*, monsieur?"

Robertson roused himself. "Surely, mademoiselle." A moment, and then: "Poor Legère! I do not know but that it has cost him more than us all. We suffer in ourselves, and we have our life experience, our teachings, our philosophies to bear us up.

"Legère has none of these things. He had but the one thing in his life that answered all—his faith. And I am afraid, mademoiselle, that this mix-up cost him even that."

The girl started around on the seat beside him, clutching his arm with terrible eagerness. "Oh, no, monsieur! Do not say it! It could not be! His faith was his very life—the very blood of his heart!"

Robertson was nodding grimly. "I believe you, mademoiselle. Legère knew nothing else. Well, it's gone, mademoiselle. All gone! He speaks of it as something that had simply died in him, and the place it occupied is empty." He paused a reminiscent moment. "When you fool a man like that, when you mock him in his very vitals, you simply kill his faith in life, his faith in faith—kill it, mademoiselle," gently.

"I doubt very much if Legère could come back even if he wanted to." A moment, then: "St. Anne's hates him. I never knew before that your people class such as he a good deal lower than the devil himself. They call him The Infidel."

There was a bleak, stony suffering on her face—a thing so poignant that Robertson felt himself deeply moved in spite of himself. There were no tears. Justine Ducharme's life of bitter struggle had left little time for tears—for weakness.

She began speaking at length, slowly, as though to herself. "I could not believe it could have hurt him so—and, ah, merciful God, how much I have to suffer for." She turned at length: "What—what is he doing? What was left for him to do?"

"He is fighting. That is his creed now, mademoiselle. He says it's the only one. You know how he *can* fight. But, too, you are probably wise enough to know that fighting gets one nowhere. It never has. You simply stack up so much to be fought that it topples over on you at length and you go down and out."

He told her briefly of matters at St. Anne's. "A gale just before we came away put him out of

business. He had no money. It comes to me now that I offered to help, but this drove everything else out of my mind."

A quiet moment, and the girl was suddenly alive, eager. "You say he needs money—that if he had some money it would save the winter to him?"

"Yes," he said wearily. "I think he had things coming his way when the gale broke him." A deep silence, and at length Robertson indicated the little room. His mind had closed again to all but that.

"What's going to happen in there, mademoiselle? I want the truth, understand—the truth! You have heard the talk—you can tell me something."

The girl's face had relaxed into a great pity. "No one can tell, monsieur. We can only hope." She put a hand on his—the concerned probationer nurse now. "It is almost dawn, monsieur. You are worn out. Go get yourself some food.

"Nothing will happen while you are gone. I know it. And—and—I shall wait here until you return."

Robertson had fallen back and closed his eyes. "I don't want to leave," he murmured half audibly.

"Please, monsieur! She would wish it if she knew. And if there is any change I promise to come for you, at once."

He pulled himself together, got up, and lurched away.

Within the little room the nurse on duty stepped to the bed. The patient, looking like a little child between the sheets, had stirred, had raised a hand slowly as if to regard it, as if to test her consciousness—and let it fall. The nurse laid a cool hand on the flushed forehead. Graciette reopened her eyes.

"Will—will you ask monsieur to—to come to me?" she panted.

"He has gone for coffee, I think. He will return presently." She turned to the stand and the hypodermic.

But the patient held up a feeble hand. "No—no, nurse, *please*," she pleaded. "Not just now. I—I must talk to him. Please——"

The nurse hesitated. Never before had she been so moved as by the care of this gentle little child-woman; her heart had ached regretfully, unremittingly. "But, my dearest one, you cannot——"

"Yes, I can stand the pain—a time. Ah, mademoiselle, please—if you have ever loved——"

Outside, Robertson was back. The girl, Justine, met him hurriedly. "She is asking the nurse for you, monsieur. Go. And will you, if you can, explain about—me?"

Robertson went in swiftly. The nurse stared in uncertainty, but already was he on the floor by the bed, his mouth pressed to one small hand.

Slowly Gracielle drew it loose and it came to rest on his hair. "I have wanted to ask you, monsieur. Will you—will you help him? Will you help him find life—true life again?" Her body was beginning to burn again as with fire; but her face lay suddenly serene. "You—you know, monsieur; all my life I have wanted to—to help, and have been forbidden——"

"Oh, little one," the man groaned, "you *have* helped! You have helped *me!* God knows how much!"

She smiled a little, weakly. "It makes me very happy," she murmured. "Now, if through you, I can help *him*——" The terrible searching pain seemed rushing now upon the very sources of her life. "Promise," she whispered faintly. "Promise that no matter what befalls, you will be his friend—that you will help him to—to come back. Promise."

"I promise." He raised his head. "You will see how much I can do, little one."

"And that other—Justine!" faintly. "If she could only—"

"She suffers, Gracielle. I have seen her. She loved Legère all the time with all her heart. She was trapped!"

"Ah, *ma pauvre!* I am *so sorry!*" The pain was twisting her body, slowly, inexorably, as if it were bound on a wheel. She kept her face to his until she could gasp out: "I know now—that I have helped—a little—at—last."

The nurse stepped forward. Robertson got up. His face, looking on, was filled with a terrible sternness. He turned away. A doctor entered and he marched toward him.

"I must have the truth, monsieur! I *will* have it!" he demanded. The institutional discretion, the impersonal absence of feeling maddened him. "What are her chances?"

The man regarded him kindly. "No one can say, monsieur. Everything is being done." His face softened in sudden sympathy. "We find an area as of old bruises on the arm, where at some time the arm has been injured. In these bruises the circulation is impeded somewhat. It is that which makes matters a bit more serious. But be of good courage, monsieur. No doubt—"

Robertson had turned away. The old bruises were probably the hoofprints of one Felix Dorion. If he could only have had him there—Robertson clenched his hands in impotent anguish.

At eight o'clock in the morning Justine Ducharme was in her own little quarters, changing for the street. There was a look of calmest determination on her face as she smoothed her hair in the mirror.

At length she knelt and unlocked a small trunk in the corner. Well down in the bottom was a little tin box. She took it out and emptied the contents on her bed—a few trinkets, some letters, a large envelope stuffed with bills.

She stared at the latter lying before her on the bed as if all it meant was pictured upon it in cold reality, as if it visibly denoted itself—the hard cash for a man's soul.

Saul Budro had given it to her the morning of the day that things had burst in St. Anne's. In a big, jovial mood of impending success, he had given it to her just as it was. There was fifteen hundred dollars. It was the sum agreed upon in her mad, bitter eagerness to be rid of Cesaire Lacasse, the sum Cesaire had expended on her schooling.

She had taken it from her uncle, meaning to give it to Lacasse before she fled with Legère. Here her heart contracted mightily, her eyes closed tight at recollection of what had happened. Lacasse had gone mad and betrayed her at the last moment.

Slowly her eyes came open. She picked up the envelope and balanced it in her hand. In breaking the pact of silence, Lacasse had relinquished all claim to either herself or repayment. And the money had lain untouched. She could not have taken a dollar of it if she had been starving.

But now— She suddenly crushed the packet in both hands and pressed it to her breast. She raised her face reverently and murmured: "God grant this may bestow some little bit of the atonement that, alas, I never shall."

At nine o'clock Justine stood before a teller's window in one of the banks. She thrust through the money. "Will you be kind enough to give me a bank check for that amount, payable to this

name; and will you also be so good as to type me an envelope to this address?"

The name she slipped through was Legère's, and the address St. Anne's.

Night had fallen, two days later. It seemed to Robertson, hunched on the hard settee outside Graciette's door, that the hours dragged themselves torturingly from out the very recesses of his own heart. He had been there for an eternity—waiting outside the door.

Early that morning they had thrust him out. And the door was closed. Through the day an increased activity had taken place in and out of the door. And at each entrance, each departure, his eyes had hungered for a word until—

His body was drugged with weariness. His mind seemed functioning sluggishly, apathetically. All day, the ebb and flow of ether fumes, stealing upon him out from nowhere, and receding from him equally stealthily—the strong, cloying, acrid *presence* that hung heavy and sweetish in his air passages, drenching him with languor, then clearing away slowly like sun through the fog—seemed at length to have gradually buried his consciousness deeper still. And now, with the added let-down of night-fall, came a strange little change within him. He was conscious of it keenly, even in his exhausted stupor.

Some little quality of his mind had become detached, as it were, and was functioning vividly, brightly, blithesomely almost—like a thing apart; on its own. And it seemed to have to do with a different world entirely, a world of gay little happiness, a world wherein appeared actual fulfillment of bright little desires, of subconscious dreams.

He was seeing keenly these bright little things—clear and sharp cut, like little pictures growing into sharp reality in brightest sunlight; and he was seeing them, too, without effort. They seemed to be pictures of Gracielle Dorion; of Gracielle Dorion, and life; and himself, Theodore Robertson. And in each and all Gracielle was of such ethereal loveliness always; Gracielle in soft, beautiful frocks; Gracielle in a garden—a garden so beautiful that it made something in one ache—oh, terribly. And behind the garden was a house—a home—a home beautiful like the garden.

But somehow, up to now, he couldn't see into the house, couldn't *get* within it—couldn't get within it even in visioning. The garden was so utterly lovely; it held him entranced by its loveliness.

But now, Gracielle was gone from the garden. And now he was getting into the house—with his mind. And now—it was very easy—he was *in* the house. It was beautiful in the house. Many things he loved were there, but there was a sadness about it—a sadness because of a waiting. And in an inner room Gracielle was in bed; and there was a doctor and nurses.

And now, out of the room came the doctor; he was a smiling, happy doctor, and from within the room—the waiting Robertson's heart gave a great gladdened leap—from within came out to him the quavering little cry of a tiny voice, a tiny new-tried voice, bleating its first little challenge to life itself. And a great joy was upon Robertson, waiting in the beautiful room. It seemed that an actual, tangible radiance had burst about him in transcendent glory, had—

Robertson started up from the settee. He had been asleep. The door was open—the hospital-room door. And something had happened.

He was inside, swiftly—dazed, confused. A nurse barred the way. "No! Please! You cannot see her, monsieur! You would not wish to see her!"

He stopped stock still, and life ran low within him. The thing had come to stand between them—between Theodore Robertson and Gracielle Dorion.

It was death.

CHAPTER XIII

A REPRIEVE

THE INFIDEL sat hunched on a rock. He was a living replica of Rodin's striving, "Thinker." Below him lay the wreckage of his plant.

He had been organizing the wreckage. He had got it disentangled. And all alone. But rebuild it he could not.

The Infidel was tattered and disheveled. In more than one place his white skin showed gleaming through his disarray. He was fighting a mental battle of deadly intensity. Massive, powerful, hunched upon himself, he was "The Thinker."

That morning the first cold had struck St. Anne's stingingly, like the snap of a whip. And it had precipitated a move of grave importance on the part of some of the fishermen—a vague thing of ominous portent that for some time had been hanging over the life of the village like gray, banked snow in a November sky. They were preparing to go away from St. Anne's.

Weeks ago, when Saul Budro had put over his raw deal on the entire life of the place, the men of St. Anne's had decided that God's hand was against it. Then, for a time, this was forgotten during Legère's flurry of business through the fall; for the moment he seemed to be succeeding.

But how could a man succeed who was fighting God? It was not to be. And the gale that had smashed him flat was but the answer.

So they planned to leave—some of them. Things were better at many places down the coast, better

and easier. St. Anne's, in the hands of a Chinese smuggler and rum-runner, on one side, and a black infidel on the other, could never by any possible chance amount to anything.

David Legère had learned of it, laboring alone among the wreckage of his plant. He was powerless to offer anything that might hold them. Without money, he might have been a worm in the dirt.

Robertson had been gone several days. There was no knowing when he would come back. And any day now, with the cold set in, might make it too late.

A man came skirting about Legère warily. Old Jean Corteau dropped a letter by The Infidel's feet and sidled away hurriedly. Safe to one side he crossed himself precipitately, and made "the horns" with his scraggy old forefingers, to ward off the evil eye.

The Infidel regarded the letter fixedly. It was hard to detach his mind from its treadmill. Presently, he picked it up and ripped it open, and a check fell out.

He stood up, did The Infidel, stood up to the uttermost inch of his great height. And he stretched himself gloriously. And he was no longer the submerged "Thinker." In two minutes he had become the David Legère of a fortnight ago—the big, smashing, irresistible force that was fighting to build a cannery, and was winning out. That's what he was! And in ten minutes all the village knew it. And in less than a half hour, half the village was over in the vicinity of the wreck—and before the hour was up were at work again, antlike, ant-eager, as before.

The Infidel had indeed been scourged of God, but when a man is in dire need of help—and has money to pay—why, what would you?

Legère had received the check with scarce a

thought as to its origin, and went forthwith to Gowdy, Doan & Robertson to get money on it. There had come no letter with it. He knew not who had sent it and he wasted no time thinking about it. That he had it was enough. Without doubt Robertson had got it to him. And some day he would pay. That was all.

Then began a frenzied, feverish activity. In two days the cannery wreckage was being restored encouragingly. In four days the place was practically back to the point it was before the gale. And over across the cove, Saul Budro was again on the brink of corroding fury and madness.

On the fifth day the man Sleeth returned to St. Anne's. That fact was not significant, however, until some time later. But things were moving very swiftly. Activities had assumed the momentum of a fly wheel that was like to burst.

That was what happened—the Legère activity burst; David Legère himself and all that touched his life were effectually annihilated in St. Anne's. It all grew out of the return of Sleeth, and it happened in this wise:

CHAPTER XIV

THE HEWING AX

A DAY of rarest Indian summer had befallen among the raw, cold days of late fall.

Early in the morning the utter peace and harmony of the day had come to impress itself powerfully, even upon David Legère himself—softening him. There is nothing in life that engenders selfness in one like the knowledge of impending success. And he was winning out.

To complete his cannery, he had driven himself almost beyond the power of one man. He had converted himself into every sort of workman the job needed. In the early days before the blow, with his great hewing ax gripped constantly in his fist, he had done work on the raw timber equal to heavy mill work; after that, he had mixed and poured concrete; now he was a machinist of grim efficiency, setting the boiler. At dawn it seemed almost as if the day had come like an actual benediction on his efforts.

Across the cove that day, however, things were brewing which had little to do with peace or benediction. The man Sleeth stood in the door of Saul Budro's cabin. He had returned to St. Anne's that morning. He wore a manner of gloating exultation that radiated from him in powerful waves.

Saul Budro felt it—felt it so that he got hurriedly to his feet. "What's up?" he asked.

"I can do it!" Sleeth announced with grinning assurance. "I can stop work on that shack across

the cove—like that!” He snapped his moist fingers sharply. “And I can fix things so that St. Anne’s won’t hold Legère twenty-four hours.”

Saul stared. Sleeth’s claims were wild to impossibility. But Sleeth’s manner was convincing. “How?”

“That’s all right—that part of it. I can do it, all right. But first, how much is it worth to you? I’m here to do a little collecting.”

When Sleeth left, a few minutes later, his manner of amazing satisfaction had communicated itself to Saul Budro also. Saul loaded up a pipe with fingers that shook with excitement. He knew now that he had his enemy down at last.

Meanwhile, in the reverent stillness of the day, Sleeth was skirting the woodland heights well back of the village, making warily around the cove for Legère’s cottage.

Gaining the deserted dooryard, his movements took on swiftness and cold certainty. With the stealth of a weasel he passed into Legère’s tool house. He came out bearing Legère’s great hewing ax, and started climbing the slope to the headland and the *calvaire* of Pierre Legère.

Sleeth’s scheme was an outrageous thing that had flashed upon him earlier in the day when landing below the headland. Now, up upon the *calvaire*, he emerged confidently from the screening spruces into the open. Before him the great weather-beaten cross lay prone on the ground below its splintered stump.

The place of the *calvaire* was screened from the village and the cove below by spruces. Up to now the accident to the cross had been known to no one save Saul Budro directly across, and Sleeth who had come upon it that very morning.

Now Sleeth advanced upon the pitiful wreckage deliberately. Swiftly he wielded the ax—deftly for

a few moments. When he finished, both cross and stump showed that the cross had undisputedly been hewn down.

Sleeth trampled the chips a moment, and discolored his work slightly, making things look a week or more old. Then he left Legère's ax conspicuously in the dirt by the cross, and passed down from the headland.

A few moments later, down on the shore, a terrified, slobbering old Jean Corteau stood transfixed before Sleeth, listening to the latter's crafty mention of the inconceivable deed that had been done up on the headland in the holy place of the *calvaire*.

Then Sleeth watched him go charging crazily away to see for himself, and, grinning complacently, he made for his boat.

Twenty minutes later the half completed cannery of David Legère was sending up a clamor of victorious construction never so triumphant. Twenty-two minutes later fate had flung athwart the building a mantle of silence that might have represented a death and dissolution going on for years.

At the turn of the afternoon a thin but frantic little piping of a man's voice had penetrated through the noise of hammer and plane and saw. It reached a shingler on the roof first, and he looked off. At some distance away old Jean Corteau stood on the beach, mouthing and screaming like a madman—screaming things unbelievable. Another moment and each individual sound of activity became plucked to silence one by one, as though each sound might have been a tangible thing falling off the building into space.

In the dead stillness old Jean was disturbingly audible. "The cross! The cross! Get yourself away from the man who has assaulted God himself!" And on a fresh breath: "For sending him

the dry blow—which served him right—he hewed down the holy cross of God Himself!” Then, frenziedly, choking: “Save yourselves quickly from the wrath of God! Come and see for yourselves!”

Another moment and men were clambering down and out from the silenced cannery, grave, still-faced—detaching themselves from the proximity of Legère as though from a presence unholy, unclean. Stumbling along in growing confusion in the wake of old Jean, they made toward the headland.

They never came back.

Up on the headland, in the place that had been a *calvaire*, came to be assembled half the people of St. Anne’s. Men with bared heads stood in frozen silence about the mutilated symbol, and the condemning ax.

Others, together with women, knelt and prayed in deep perturbation of soul. Even McTavish, the Scotsman, peering in from the rear, straightway bared his head.

The thing was inconceivable. It sunned life itself at the very roots. The heretic’s soul was his own to damn forever if he must; but in this thing he had attacked all life, all faith—to their way of reasoning, God’s very person.

In the solemn stillness of the hilltop did David Legère become condemned of his kind forever and beyond all fathoming. It was a process that needed no words, no sitting in judgment. No man in St. Anne’s would approach him now any more than he would embrace a leper.

It was the involuntary sentencee of their soul of souls—swift, certain—as instinctive as breathing air into the lungs. And it was as sublimely inexorable as a scroll rolled up—rolled up and set with the seal of an everlasting God.

In the somber time of dusk, in the plant that was to go unfinished, the man Legère stood alone. He

had just come down from the empty headland. The hopelessness of the thing was crushing him; his project in St. Anne's was doomed forever. He gave little thought as to who might have done the thing on the headland—he had enemies enough—but better than most did he know how far it closed all life to him.

He was alone.

Beyond him, as he stood, the boiler stack was dangling in its fall, unset. It was never lowered. A handsaw rested in its cut, out through the board walls. It rusted there. On a cool breath of approaching night that came to him through the unglazed windows, the bell for vespers summoned to worship. It pulsated sweetly in his ears—and with terrible mockery.

What had he to worship for? He glanced at the great stack, forever deprived of its function; at the swift-thwarted handsaw, that now would rust.

He passed out.

For hours that night Legère lay on his bed stark and wakeful. Every fiber of him was groping for solution, for understanding. He had but meant to withdraw from God, and God, if God there was, had withdrawn from him; he had but meant to hold himself aloof from the claims of mankind, and lo all mankind had turned away!

Even his half-stifled regard for young Robertson had turned on him. For on his solitary way home that day Saul Budro, hoping to cut off every possible chance of further help, had stood gloating by the side of the road and yelled after him in crazy glee the fact of Robertson's connection with affairs through Gowdy, Doan & Robertson. Legère had but meant to live unto himself alone, and now he *was* alone; alone in his house, alone in St. Anne's, alone in life.

And what was the answer? What the trend of it all?

He recalled Father André's warning that the man who fights for himself alone carries the seeds of defeat sown in his every act. Could this be true? He recalled Robertson saying to him: "Your setting yourself off from your kind isn't sensible—isn't human, and it will surely get you in the end." It *had* got him.

Whoever had hewn down the cross had figured just on that: that as a heretic, Legère would be condemned unquestioned. Such a thing could not have happened under any other circumstances.

Legère got up. He sat heavily on the side of the bed, staring, inert, dumb.

What to do?

He did not know. In every fiber he struggled for a ray of light in the awful black cavern of life. Useless! He paced the floor. If, as his mother said, some men needed breaking to teach them—ah, surely was he broken, but as yet he had not been taught.

Daybreak came a little later, and with the dawn Jo Michelle stood in the kitchen waiting. "I have been away, M'sieu' David. I have just got back, and just heard." Legère's eyes were staring out of the window. "I—I know what it is like—being alone!"

Legère turned from the window. "Jo," he said, "is there a God?"

"Of course, M'sieu' David."

"Then what have *I* done to be damned alive?"

"I know not, m'sieu'."

Legère turned back to regard the sea—the never-resting sea that rose and tossed and swayed, on and on, and never stopped. "Up to now I have only done what any man might do—I refused to

believe, but I said nothing and minded my own affairs. Now I seem even to be outcast from men. And for what?" He stopped, and his voice came full. "Now, I am *compelled* to fight, my Jo. It is that or die. The priest said once, 'God may be using the sea as his agent,' and all my misfortunes have come from the sea.

"So it seems I am forced at length to fight it out with the sea—I must live somehow, and the sea is all that's left to me. I'm going to Newfoundland, Jo, for the winter herring. Will you go?"

"Yes, M'sieu' David. I will go."

"All right." A moment, then: "It is a bitter country, Jo—that country in winter. But it is all the life I know. I'll come back a man with a place, or I'll not come back at all. And," wearily, "may it be a good fight—and a short one!"

Later in the day, Father André, accompanied by one of the St. Anne coast men just ashore, strode down from his place on the hillside, down to the little main street where well-nigh the entire village congregated and talked—soberly, low-toned.

There was a stern majesty about his bearing that brought a sullen deference. He summoned them all. He stood in their midst, his eyes ablaze with feeling, his white hair adrift in the wind.

"Listen, all," he commanded in a voice of quivering intensity. "You have done a terrible thing in the sight of God, to condemn a man unheard!" He turned to the seaman who had accompanied him. "Speak, Anastase!"

The man faced them calmly, gravely. "A fortnight or more ago, on the day of the dry blow, I had to put in shore below the headland yonder and lay out the gale. The holy cross up on the *calvaire* was snapped off that day by the wind.

I saw it. David Legére was at his cannery at the time. He had nothing to do with it."

The priest spoke at once. "I want you all to make amends. I want every man here to pray for forgiveness, and for David Legére. I want—"

The priest looked up. A wagon had emerged from the upper woods and was speeding down the slope into the town—the wagon of Narcisse Comeau, bringing a passenger to St. Anne's.

The pair of sweating horses rounded up. The passenger was Tod Robertson. He seemed very white, very tired. He spoke to Father André and the people heard:

"I have come back to say that I am throwing my lot in with Legére, monsieur, on the development of St. Anne's. I have made a promise to that effect. Where is Legére?"

A look of sorrowing regret deepened on the priest's face. "No man knows, monsieur. He has left St. Anne's."

BOOK FIVE

THE SEA



CHAPTER I

THE STORM

THE herring-fisherman *Phantom*, out of Lunenburg was running up the west coast of Newfoundland. Among her crew were David Legère and Jo Michelle.

Legère had come out to battle with the sea. And battle was to be his. The sea was to teach him, profoundly; was to unfold to him great truths through the simple processes of his own reasoning; finally, was to present to him the lesson of all life, ready for his acceptance or rejection. But this he could not know.

It was getting along in December, and the entire coast country of the Gulf was fast in the iron grip of winter. The *Phantom* had been long on the way. At times, for days at a stretch, she had been hove to, riding out unholy gales.

But still she kept on, heading along into a region of fierce, watery wilds—for no fisherman turns back until the run is made. Now, the Newfoundland coast lay to the eastward, and the *Phantom* was picking her way north, toward her destination of Bonne Bay.

And now, late in the day, when a run of a hundred miles ought to bring her in, the wind was hauling to the north'ard; it was turning bitterly cold, and the glass was falling fast.

The captain stumbled up from below. He sized things up in a trice. "This wind's blowin' straight outa hell," he growled, "but I'm goin' to run on and make Bonne Bay or die tryin'!"

His commands spattered sharply, like buckshot. The vessel came up in the wind, amid the thudding, bubbling thunder of gale-slatted sails. The mainsail was taken in; the riding sail set.

Still the wind grew. Nightfall—and the jib was taken in, and put in a jacket. The jumbo was taken off. The *Phantom* rode shackled in the sea like some great sea gull with wings clipped and bound.

Now the wind held a freezing sting like the bite of a knife. Suddenly it leaped to the fury of a gale. In a mad flurry of command, all sail came off the *Phantom* but the double-reefed foresail.

Then the captain sang out: "Below all but the watch!"

Legère separated from the bunch of men. The dogwatch was over. It was eight o'clock. "Better let *me* take this watch," he said laconically.

The captain eyed him appraisingly. "No. We'll need a man like you later. Send up Michelle."

Down below, Legère passed far forward and sat down on a locker in "the eyes of her." A man had risen on his entrance and crawled into a bunk. Now he sat with his back against the bulkhead, his knees hunched, his face in the shadow, staring with ever-sleepless eyes at Legère up for'ard.

This man was the sailor, Sleeth. He was already a member of the crew when at the last minute Legère had shipped.

Sleeth had got out of the North Shore country. He had left St. Anne's well satisfied with what he had done, and he never intended to go back. But here was Nemesis right on his trail. And his

days and nights had become one long nightmare of fear, for something told him that Legère *knew*.

He was right. Legère *did* know—much. Jo Michelle long ago had learned of Sleeth's activities against Legère, and when he found him among the *Phantom's* crew, had told Legère, and warned him.

Neither Jo nor Legère could know of Sleeth's final stroke in St. Anne's, but Legère had begun to connect much of his disaster to this man; he felt that some time he was going to kill him, and as to this, he brooded always. Sleeth felt the weight of Legère's decision as though he had been told, and Legère's somber eyes, always upon him, were gradually unhinging the thing of his reason.

The vessel took to ramming the waves with mighty, jerking thuds. The fo'c'sle floor listed ever and anon to a reckless slant, and the place resounded with the prolonged faint tinkle of loose things—crockery, nails, cutlery—jingling along to a place of rest.

The gale was increasing. Even down below could be heard the never-ceasing scream of the wind in the rigging—the long, swashing roar of seas.

The crew got up at length, lurched about, gripping at the stanchions, and melted carelessly into the bunks. Jo Michelle was the watch on deck. Legère was alone. He did not sleep. Neither did the man in one of the upper bunks.

At midnight Jo Michelle came stumbling down, bringing a raw blast of clean, though freezing air. "Your watch, M'sieu' David."

Legère went on deck. In five minutes he stood lashed to the wheel. All about him was impenetrable blackness, and the sea. It came to be a night that marked an epoch in Legère's life; he remembered it to the day of his death.

Alone in the blackness, his body lashed to immo-

bility, he could only think; but he could think clearly, directly, with the penetrating illumination of a searchlight. And as his eyes accustomed themselves to the darkness, he stared at the black, roaring void with calm speculation.

It stirred things in him—great vital things of the soul that he had never guessed—wonder, awe, supremest homage to the might that moved in it. The sea first laid hold on David Legère that night.

Time and time again he watched the empty blackness ahead change; change suddenly from empty blackness to a blackness that *lived*, lived riotously; a throbbing, pulsating blackness that his eyes followed up to toppling heights, heights of slapping, deadly ascent that finally blossomed a roaring, foaming crest, visibly white. And sometimes this roaring, palpitating blackness would snatch the vessel up—up—up—with giddy velocity, until it seemed her spars would pierce the sky; and then she would drop down—down—swiftly down, until the foresail was calmed rapidly in the trough of the sea.

And sometimes, again, the blackness would simply come lolling straight forward toward him as though racing directly forth from some yawning hell, and would burst along the vessel and sweep aft and half bury the living thing at the wheel, and tear at the life of him; and then—

It was very bad.

And through it all, the thoughts that stirred in Legère's soul rushed inevitably, and seemingly without will of his, to the stark, bald question of: "What is doing all this? And why?"

At first his mind would not answer, save that it was a *force*, the same force that ruled all things—a force that staggered the mind even to consider. And yet, he, Legère, a mere puny man, had set himself against this *force*.

The thought revealed Legère to himself—and dis-

heartened him sickeningly. For straightway he knew that there could be but one answer: The *force was God.*

In that very hour Legère came to recognize it—the truth was beaten into his consciousness amid terrible turmoil that was undermining his will to its very roots.

And at length loneliness swept him, loneliness and helplessness of soul. And suddenly in the terrible loneliness, with his will relaxed and spent, he was conscious of something newly reentered to life within him—something familiar, something that warmed and stirred him through and through. *Love* had come back.

In a sudden rush of recklessness Legère gave in to it; threw down every barrier to it; relived again all its joy, torturing himself with its bitter sweetness, and shutting out only the sorrow. And love stayed with him. It burned through his veins with fierce, ravening ecstasy. It glorified the madness of the night.

Legère stayed on until daylight. Toward morning it hailed. With a terrific snor-rring rush the missiles filled the whole world of gray night, and nothing escaped, not even the man; and when these things struck they brought the blood. But he ducked his head, and lived on.

At times battle with the sea wages very fierce, and victory is by so narrow a margin as to be quite empty of glory. The dawn peered curiously at the grisly thing at the wheel. It was tall and stark. Its oilskins, frozen into sharp, rigid lines, made it look *hewn out*, with clumsy, unskillful strokes.

Ice was sodden on the great mittens; ice lay gray and opaque in the hollows of the shoulders; icicles fringed the stiff sou'wester and hung down around the brooding face. That morning when the man at the wheel was spelled, the captain made for'ard

himself with a shot of rum to give him, in profoundest admiration.

Below, the men regarded the frozen apparition, that had stood a double watch, as they might a stone image that walked. They had never fathomed him; they could not now.

Two days it took to satisfy that gale. On the third day when it died out the crew were sullen, morose, discouraged. They should have had a good run of herring, and got out of this country long ago. As it was they had not even reached the grounds—without doubt had run far by.

Matters had long since passed by the thing of ordinary "luck." There was something deeper the trouble. Luck was not only playing with them, but was set against them—dead.

The man Sleeth listened and spoke darkly from the edge of his bunk—Legère and Jo were on deck. "You know the answer, don't you, bullies? It's Legère that's the Jonah!"

"He don't believe in no God, that man. Down where he come from, the Canucks won't give him a kind look. They call him The Infidel, and he's about *canned* the town he come from!"

It was enough. It was the bit of leaven. It began to work.

Next morning it was Legère who sighted Bonne Bay in the mists. The crew revived—somewhat.

But the world fears a silent man. The crew feared Legère, and fearing, hated him. It was instinct.

CHAPTER II

HERDSMEN OF THE SEA

THE *Phantom* anchored off the cliffs and ran a line in shore. And down from the hills came a horde of Newfoundlanders. They swarmed off aboard, a motley crew. They represented every type and mold of man. But in one thing they were the same—to a man they harbored a grim and bottomless hunger.

The cook fell to, a harassed maniac. He had one helper, a second maniac. Barrels of grub were salvaged from the hold. In the fo'e's'le stove the red-hot fire never dwindled; by the end of the run the stove would be melted down.

On deck, the *Phantom* might have been a fragment of honey discovered by ravenous bees. Men swarmed all over her. The hold was disgorging, was yielding up an indiscriminate mess of gill nets, buoys, floats; of oilskins, oars and gear; of barrels, salt and grub.

The next morning the fishing began. The herring were running well. The captain was overjoyed. He made a deal with another belated vessel to sell them his herring salt, and planned to stay himself for another load, to freeze. He put four men to work building a freezing-scaffold between the masts above the deck.

At night the fo'e's'le was packed to suffocation. Legère watched from the background. This was the life of the sea. These were the herdsman of the sea. Legère watched; and, watching, reflected.

Down by the little, jerking brass lamp sat a big

Dane who had shipped from Halifax. He was half naked; in the semigloom, his magnetic white torso rose upward like some strange magnificent flower, from its calyx of grimy clothing at the waist.

Down on a locker by the stove four others were intently watching a fifth. Gripped between his knees, this man held a big can of shellac. He was stirring it furiously with a paddle to separate a possible round of raw alcohol from the baser ingredients. The salt-reddened eyelids of his watchers framed fixed stares of famished intensity, their lax lips drooled.

Out of some of the bunks hung dangling legs, unbooted. Down in a bulkhead bunk beyond the stove the cook slept busily and snored magnificently. Over all, the foul close air, heavy with the smell of the supper's fried pork, of vile tobacco smoke, of the reek of bodies, hung rank and unstirred in the few open spaces.

For the rest Legère listened to tales being told by the men from off shore, tales of cold, and sickness, and bitter privation; tales of man-prowess on sea and land that would put to shame the pages of romance; tales of famished lives, of glorious deaths; tales of horror, of gory man-battles—gruesome, unspeakable tales. Ah, a man's country this, where man was gauged by the measure of his brawn and where fear was not.

But suddenly, in all this, a sharp thought struck Legère. With these fishermen, here in Newfoundland, life was a matter of keeping alive only, and of fighting for the means thereof. Here, the sufferings, the griefs, were mere animal sufferings, animal griefs, and the joys the same. Great soaring ambitions of the mind, of the spirit—of faiths, of loves—did not appear; neither did the corresponding sufferings.

Legère was being taught profoundly, and this set

him to thinking deeply. He was learning of the grim, terrible fighting done all their lives by these people of the sea—yes; but he saw all this was but the fighting of *material* things. And yet, it was this very thing that *he* had come forth to do.

Suddenly he knew that he could be a finished master at all this, but it would not bring him peace. And then, it was as though a great light dawned upon him, and he knew the truth. That peace for the spirit was to be found only in spirit. Up to now he had been all wrong. But how, then, was he to come upon peace? The thought was too big for him.

Meanwhile all this sickened him. The *Phantom* might have been a breeding cage of human spawn. Down aft in the hold was the overflow. Legère wormed out of the fo'c's'le. His personal independence, the fastidious claims of his own person drove him out. He spent the night on deck.

And in the watches of the long night, he tried to reason out this new thing: That the great battles of life were not matters of food and shelter as with these Newfoundlanders, nor yet of canneries and railroads as with himself. The *great* battles had to do with the things within one, with the things of one's own great passions and hopes and despairs, things that could not be fought with two hands—any more than could the great force behind the elements. And again he finally gave up in despair.

And then love came again to be with him. And this time, too, he let it stay. And now it was not the fierce, flaming thing that tortured his body, as on that other night. It was a blessed advent throughout; it brought a glow of infinite sweetness, although of great sadness. And in his new-acquired habit of thinking, of analyzing, of trying to get at the bottom of things, his mind came to wrestle also with this thing of love.

What was it? Whence was it? Again had he

found a thing he could not fight with his two hands—something that was stronger than every last thing in the world put together—stronger than himself—stronger than life. The source of it? Suddenly he was startled. Could it be at one with the *force* behind the elements?

He considered this deeply. If this be true, what use then to fight at all?

Again did loneliness and bitter helplessness fill him with deepest dejection. He wormed his body far into its shelter in a fold of the mainsail. He was sick with the agony of it all, and then——

The watch shook him awake. It was a new day.

CHAPTER III

FEAR

THE man Sleeth was afraid. For days now he had been slowly scaring himself to death. Both he and Legère knew each other's thoughts beyond all doubt.

It so happened that one night they ate together with the same crew. Sleeth felt Legère's somber eyes burning directly on him as he sat down. He did not look up for some time, and when he did the eyes of the other seemed to him, in his nervous state, to be gravely studying the very things of his soul. And now, he could not look away.

Legère broke his bread, casually, and ate his fried pork, and drank from his dipper of tea, but his eyes never left the eyes of the other. And Sleeth sat staring back as a bird might stare at a snake, and horrible fear seized upon him, and froze him with a sickening, deadly chill.

Sleeth threw down his eating tools, sprang into his bunk and cowered there. But the fascination of fear drove him to peek out. And still his eyes met and were swallowed up in the deliberate regard of the other's, burning up at him, calmly, relentlessly.

Later, Sleeth was hunched in the shadows and the great young St. Anner sat in his old vantage point far up for'ard, and gazed up at him blandly. And the fo'c'sle reeked with smoke, and the smoke wove things out of the wretch's fancy—sinister things, gruesome things, wholly malevolent in their grip of his mind. He saw himself dying in a dozen

ways at the other's hands—broken, mauled, flung aside a shapeless, battered mass of flesh.

Outside, the night turned suddenly eerie and ghostly with great silent falling snow. The whole world seemed a close-packed, feathery mass.

It heaped up high all along the freezing-scaffold above the deck. It made of the vessel a foolish little toy ship; like a crude little plaything made of sugar, with clumsy sugar rigging, and clumsy sugar spars. It buried completely all suggestion of swiftness—of strength.

Before dawn the sea was a gray expanse of soft dappled mush. Suddenly, the quality of the snow changed to a harsher nature. The wind had hauled, and it came down in blinding sheets. The wind picked up in intensity and turned piercing cold. The wind grew to a gale.

There was no fishing that day. The fo'c'sle was a clogged beehive of gloomy men who smoked in silence, and shook their heads. And all that day the man Sleeth lay in his bunk trying to avoid losing his very reason in a pair of calm-burning eyes in a great figure enthroned up forward like a big, magnificent idol of sheerest manhood.

By nightfall the sea heaved inertly under a coverlid of "pancake" ice—ice formed of the freezing slush, and broken into discs. And in places were wide expanses of heavier ice—shore ice, evidently, or fresh-water ice, afloat in the wash. And clumsier cakes appeared—gray, desolate, sodden, slumping about on the messy sea in sloshing wave-devoured plateaus. And the piercing cold grew.

Long after dark Sleeth crept forth from his bunk furtively, like a rat, after food. Most of the crew had been fed. Legère was on deck.

Sleeth slipped along a locker for a mug of hot tea. He looked ghastly in his dank, moist undress; his lank hair was plastered with moisture; his eyes

were incandescent as though with fever. He grabbed at the scalding tea and supped it eagerly. Its fire drove a firmness into him—a strength. He passed it back for another.

Around him the men were cursing solemnly, viciously. If they were nipped in, they would be there all winter. A great inspiration struck Sleeth.

"I told you he was a Jonah, that St. Anner!" he cried out. "Now I guess you believe me!"

A meditative silence greeted him. Sleeth opened up again. If he could only stir them up enough to *get Legère!* He began a venomous tirade of taunts, jeers.

He was sitting at the table now, all engrossed in his loud talk. A big figure slid into place through the men opposite and fixed Sleeth's eyes in a dead silence. It was Legère.

Sleeth choked. He sat still trying to mumble a crust of bread, his eyes fixed. He dared not flee. And as he watched, he felt his scalp tighten—felt the skin at the back of his neck grow suddenly ice cold as if brushed wetly with rapidly-evaporating ether.

Legère's hand had closed idly on a sheath-knife. He was toying with it. Sleeth's bulging eyes swam as he noted the play of tendons and sinews as Legère's hand gripped the knife—turned it over, flicked it with his fingers, played with it.

Sleeth crawled into his bunk. He was terribly sick. And in him was growing the despairing fighting spark of the cornered rat.

About ten o'clock he crawled out. Still like a rat, he slipped up for'ard. Legère sat leaning inertly back on the locker, where he had fallen asleep.

Sleeth stared with fascinated, beady eyes at the other's chest, bared for coolness in the close, heavy air. He lunged with the sheath-knife, madly, furiously—and slipped. A lightning thread of scarlet

had flashed across the white skin of Legère's chest, had opened widely and poured.

Legère sprang erect. He shot a glance after the dim figure stumbling away from him, making for the companionway, and he leaped in pursuit. He overtook it on deck aft; it was making for the protection of the watch.

Sleeth turned and lunged again madly. The two locked together, careened on the icy deck and went overboard. The watch and two others from the fo'c'sle rushed to the rail and stared at the black opening in the ice wash, that swirled wildly like a boiling spring.

Down below, while he was still striking out madly with the knife, the man Sleeth's fear was being quieted forever. Once Legère's face emerged a moment for air, but the other's did not.

The water settled to stillness. The watchers saw a man emerge, catch a rope and climb aboard like a leopard.

It was Legère—alone.

CHAPTER IV

NIPPED IN

THE *Phantom* was "nipped in"—frozen solid into the ice. When the furious, piercing cold abated, the sea wore a solid white coverlid of ice. And it extended all over. And already it was of a thickness that no ice breaker could get through. And each day now would make it thicker. The *Phantom* would be where she was until spring.

The crew was filled with bitter wrath, to a man. And, to a man, they cast constant black looks at Legère—Legère, the God-hater; Legère, the Infidel; Legère, the Jonah. And their looks now were frankly easy to read.

Legère himself was again helpless before the things of fate. Again had the sea thwarted him; again was he beaten, and helpless.

His greatest emotion, now, was a feeling of wonder at it. Why was it? What was the motive underlying it all? Why was he being so constantly balked and thwarted? Why?

In the enforced idleness of that day Legère found the answer; it had been the priest's, Père André's, answer, but now in the light of his new discoveries it had a bearing of truth that was worth considering. The priest had sought him in the final days of misfortune in St. Anne's, to try to reason again with him. And the priest had said: "You are a part of God's great plan, and you cannot get away from it even if you will. But you must bow to it. It is hopeless to fight Divine wisdom; the world is run by it--how could it be run else? It is the law

of all laws. God is but molding thee, perchance, for great things in life, and thou art compelling Him to teach thee by first breaking thee."

And now his concluding words struck Legère with a new and blinding significance.

"All human experiences are sent us to teach us. By refusing to learn their lessons, they come back again and again until we do; and if we fight, then they come back only in redoubled vigor. My son, remember this: Just so long as you fight God, just so long will you be beaten, for in fighting God you are fighting *yourself*."

For a long time Legère lay very still. And one by one things coupled together in his mind: the great *force* that lay behind the sea and all the elements, and the power that created love was God—could it be possible, also, that he ordained the hopes and ambitions within one, and made use of them to carry out his great plan?

From that day, Legère began to reason over all the things of his life from a different angle. Meanwhile——

He sensed trouble from the crew even before Jo came to warn him. There came a day when the Newfoundlanders piled over onto the ice and dribbled ashore to the last man. They took with them the big Dane, who held a commission from the crew of the *Phantom*.

The man Sleeth, so far as the crew needed for their purpose, was murdered. A murder on shipboard came under the jurisdiction of the port it was committed in. The Dane was to acquaint the authorities, have things all ready, and when the hour was ripe they would promise to have Legère, the murderer, ashore.

The plan worked all right, and the hour struck. But when the seamen of the *Phantom* attempted to

spring their trap it was as though the imprisoned vessel had become a den of wild animals.

Legère and Michelle had fought with any weapon to hand. Four men managed to make the deck in pursuit of them. Two went down and out into the icy scuppers; a third was hurled by Legère bodily into a nest of net boats, where he dangled inert and motionless, and dribbled blood peaceably; and a fourth was knocked completely over the rail onto the ice below. It was the way of the sea.

Legère and Michelle were over upon the ice and running swiftly for a concealing point along the shore, where already they had hidden a small cache of supplies. And once around the point, Legère came to a dead halt.

He stood still, towering tall and erect. His face was battered; his mouth and chin looked as if he had been feeding on raw meat. But Michelle saw that it was not on things of the body that he was thinking. He was rigid, abstracted; a little perplexed frown was stamped upon his face as though he were trying to pierce the unknown with a tense, concentrated ray of thought.

Michelle had recovered his wind. "M'sieu' David," he gasped in wonderment, "what is it?"

Legère spoke. "I am going back to St. Anne's, Jo. I know not when or how, but I am going back to St. Anne's. I knew it the minute my feet struck the ice."

Jo crossed himself devoutly. "But, M'sieu' David, in St. Anne's they won't permit you to—"

"Just the same I'm going back. But before that time comes—"

He shivered slightly as he started for the line of the shore.

They made north along the coast, Legère and Michelle. Up along they would find the seal coun-

try, where later they could take a hand in the shore seal fishing, and, too, stand a chance of somehow or other meeting up with a sealer that might take them out.

For weeks they journeyed, these two, along a sparsely-settled coast, where they came close to the heart of a people of wistfully bleak and barren lives, but of faith inviolable.

And in all this time Legère had pondered constantly on the things opened up to him by the words of the priest. He found that to the God-inclined the priest's theory of the "law of laws" might answer for much that had come to him himself in his own life.

Gradually, inexorably, through the long silent hours he had been forced to acknowledge the God in all things, and consequently the futility of fighting back. Sometimes he felt he might be even inclined to *learn*—learn the lesson in the bitter experiences that had come to him. But as to that he could not tell—yet.

And so they came to Chalnak, which was to be journey's end; Chalnak, that Legère was never to forget.

CHAPTER V

THE BOTTOM OF LIFE

DAVID LEGÈRE had been in the Chalnak country several weeks. The winter was passing, and the seal hunters of Chalnak were out, looking like tiny specks upon the far, white stretches of ice.

As the hunting progressed the sea became mere and more open, the white of the ice more and more mingled with the black of the water, the water running into zigzag channels that changed constantly. And still the seals came, sometimes in such great colonies as to seem to make the ice field alive.

Then gradually the ice of the sea began to break away from the ice that clung along the shore, which was still unbroken and intact. And now when they went to hunt, the hunters from shore took flat-bottomed boats with them, and when the shore ice happened to be separated from the outlying floe they crossed the narrow strip of intervening water in the boat and pulled it out upon the ice on the other side.

Legère and his comrade had no boat of their own, so their operations were confined to the ice margins along the coast. They were able to hunt on the outer fields only when the wind was on shore and the outer ice was held close on the coast, and no open water intervened.

There came a day when they had started out together, Legère and Michelle—in fact, now, they never traveled apart. Through the winter they had grown very close to each other, these two. The tie that had bound them since early boyhood had grown power-

ful and constant through the years. And now for weeks Legère had fanned the little flame of his love for Jo Michelle deliberately, encouragingly. Always it warmed something within him.

This day the wind was on shore, and the two crossed easily the thin threads of black water running between the shore ice and the world of floes farther out, where the hunting was best. And far out, among the hummocks and winter-built mounds and towers and pinnacles, they became separated, each being drawn on and on in pursuit of the kill.

Legère's luck was phenomenal. Always his gaff lunged like lightning and it never missed. By the middle of the afternoon he had hauled several drags of pelts, nested in each other like great pods, to an elevation in the ice field which he could make out from a distance. His gaff was a reeking thing of red; his own clothing, his hands and face, were smeared in crimson and black, with blood and with the hot, steaming fat.

Suddenly he stopped. He stood erect, a solitary speck in the great white vastness. Something like a voice of warning had roused him—something that brought him to his senses like a stirring wind blowing chill on his spirit. The seal drag slipped from his grasp, striking the ice with a greasy *flap*.

For an instant he knew not what had stopped him. Then it struck him like a javelin. The wind had changed. It was blowing off shore!

Everything within him now leaped to attention. He ran up to the crest of a rise in the ice. Far toward land he saw hunters making for the shore ice like ants. And they were running.

Even as he looked he could see that the black streaks of water had become more numerous in toward shore, and a well-defined area of water had opened up between the rim ice and the floes. Legère leaped down and raced.

He moved across the great white desert with the lope of a wolf. On a rise he hailed mightily. The boats had all gone but one. The crew heard and waited stolidly. Legère dashed in and slowed up.

Now there was considerable open water in the direction of the shore. And the floes were jamming and turning with grim deliberation, and sending up sodden, drumlike thunders, and long, splintering crashes.

A hunter spoke soberly. "Stir yourself, my lad! We'll get mashed in a few minutes."

Suddenly Legère stopped, and shot a glance around. "Where's Michelle?" he asked.

No one knew. He had not gone ashore among the foot hunters. He had not been with the boats. One man spoke soberly. He had seen him an hour ago, far to the south.

A terrific rending came in the slow-changing world of ice, a terrific, crunching, mumbling roar that struck to the very heart. The vast pattern of ice and water abroad upon the sea changed in slow, weird magic. The boatman cried out sharply with an oath: "Board, man!"

But Legère shook his head. "No. I'm going to find Michelle."

The boat was in the water. The men were considerately tossing him back a little hail of gear that clattered about his feet—a tin of tea and one of matches; an extra knife; scraps of the day's food.

Legère looked at them quietly. "We'll be back when the wind shifts," he called out.

The man in the boat muttered beneath his breath. "Maybe!" he grunted.

Three days.

In three days' wandering Legère had not been able to find his comrade; and he was lost—a human atom—in the world of ice.

He had searched the first day until the sun went down, and found no living thing in the weird white wastes, finally not even a seal. And he had been forced hurriedly to camp for the night.

He hollowed out a shelter in the leeward side of a hillock of frozen snow, and dug in. The warmth of his body tempered the cold inside somewhat; for the rest he kept moving about. He had not eaten—the tiny scraps of food he saved.

And in the morning the entire face of the sea had changed; the ice had turned, and circled, and crawled upon itself, until yesterday's landmarks were gone. The shore, swallowed up in the distance, might have been one of several different ice elevations. And now the whole world of the ice seemed moving.

All that day Legère had searched, and without success. He had come across a boat on the ice, evidently relinquished in haste by hunters the day before. It rested mockingly before his eyes, far now from any open water—preëminent in its uselessness. But he dragged it up onto a higher elevation where he might find it later, if only for shelter. In it he found a little tin of hardened seal oil.

And that night, too, had closed down fruitless; and again he built himself a shelter and crawled in. He had not eaten. The seals seemed to have departed. He was saving the scraps for Michelle.

He managed a little tea from the seal oil, with a rag wick, in a tin. That day the loneliness had been getting Legère.

The third day dawned in blinding diamond-brilliance, and with a keen, roving cold that gnawed like acid. The air quivered and scintillated with frost. The world of ice turned flinty—became a chaste, trackless waste of sheerest marble powdered with mica, ethereally blue in shadows, and wholly soulless.

Legère journeyed about in an ever-widening circle, and with ever-narrowing strength. He had not eaten for two days, nor sighted a living thing. Michelle could not be moving about, or somehow in his own wanderings he must have seen him in the distance. He must have been wounded, and be lying lost somewhere in the depressions of the floe.

That day Legère began to take note of the strange freaks of his mind. It took on an odd fashion of wandering far, into all sorts of realms. It was uncanny, born of the dread loneliness.

The day remained all through the stark, diamond-like thing of piercing cold. The sun dropped. In his widening circle, Legère was coming into a more broken country, into a region where winter had jumbled its materials of snow and ice and frost into a domain of weird phantasy. There rose all about him a fantastic maze of glittering shapes, like huge ornaments of crystal that might have been conceived by a disordered mind, and constantly discarded, unfinished, to start on another.

Suddenly a change stole across the face of things. The world was slowly reclaimed from its soulless white brilliancy, and life dawned through it—a life of sheer, peerless beauty that glorified it, although it intensified the haunting loneliness a hundredfold. A world of radiant color was born of the setting sun. Gold, and orange, and rose dawned through the pinnacles and towers and turrets in the nearest distance; and amethyst, and violet, and sheerest sapphire far off, until lost in the deep purple of the east.

And through all this weird enchantment, as through interminable enchanted halls, the wanderer stumbled doggedly, wearily. He was afraid of it—sickeningly afraid of it. It was the sort of world one sees in dreams, endless in its aisles of supernal beauty, terrifying in its grim outlandishness. Once

he put forth his hand and touched a pillar that at a distance had been a resplendent pillar of sapphire —touched it to test its actuality, and the measure of his reason.

All at once, the wanderer stopped. His mind had flashed clear of all vaporings. At his feet lay spots, splotches, pools of color, of crimson that stayed red and changed not, and that he knew was blood. And with the color he noted snow crumpled by a trail.

He began to run along the bloody trail. And now as he ran, the body of a dead seal lay in his path; then a broken gaff. On he ran. He ran swiftly around a jumble of hillocks, threaded in through a tiny desile, and there—

Legère threw himself down. He had found Michelle.

In the greatness of his relief, Legère's manhood went well-nigh to water. He clasped Jo in his arms. He fondled him like a child, and there came a desperate choking in his throat.

But the man in his arms was not moving—not responding, although his heart was still beating, sluggishly. Legère glanced around. Michelle's leg lay in a sodden frozen stain, still red in the falling light. The "hood" seal Legère had passed had probably got him, for Legère knew that the slashing jaws of a "hood" can sheer through anything short of steel.

Legère pulled sharply together every faculty of his mind, of his body. If Michelle died it would be more than a man that would be leaving him now—it would be the last of all human ties that was left in Legère's life. He forced himself steady, forced himself to move swiftly.

The enchanted hues about him were settling to uniformity now; a transparent tinge of saffron held the wilderness of ice.

In a few moments Legère had a tin of hot tea

at the man's mouth. Then, only, did his hand shake—foolishly, violently. He forced the hot stuff down the other's throat.

In a moment Jo's eyes came apart. "I knew you'd come, m'sieu'," he murmured, "but—" He was gone again.

A single wave of the great loneliness shook Legère through and through. And out of the vast, still distances, settling to quiet hues, came a long, wailing cry, as though the very spirit of the wastes itself was bewailing his own desolation. Legère leaped up; it was the gurgling, blubbering, throaty blat of a young seal.

On a swift inspiration, Legère raced away in the direction of the cry. Again it came. He changed his course, leaping, stalking, peering like some strange panther.

All life now depended on that young seal. And it could no more have escaped this hunter than it could have flown. With lightning jabs, Legère struck down both the dog seal and the mother.

He had their pelts off in a moment, like stripping off husks. Then he caught up the young seal, soft, and fat, and *warm*, and ran.

It was an idea born only of despair. He thrust the live seal close inside the great jacket of the man on the ice and lashed it in; threw over him the green pelts still warm and steaming.

He hollowed out a shelter swiftly, like a burrowing dog, and laid the living bundle in it out of the knife-cold cold. He made more tea. Then he lay down beside the bundle, and clasped it close, for further warmth.

The glow abroad in things was settling to soft tenderness, to amethyst and mauve.

For a moment the injured man's life stream seemed to thin again, and sag along sluggishly. And he babbled, faintly.

Legère lay staring into the blankness and, with his own mind, followed along the course taken by the great things of Michelle's own life, as revealed by his babbling. And now he learned many things about Jo. He learned that he must have been in Quebec at the time of Graciette's death, for he babbled of all this; of a Mass that would mean repose for her soul; and of seeing her left behind in the cold earth.

And then—

The voice guttered low—went out. The awful silence of the ice wilderness seemed to roar in Legère's ears. He sprang up. He used his last tea. There was nothing more.

And now he knew it was the man, Michelle himself, that he was fighting to hold with him—Michelle, the lovable comrade. He was the only living thing left for Legère to expend love upon. And Legère knew now that a man must have *something*—he had known for long that the urge to love underlay all life, *was* life—*was* God; love of country, love of progress, love of human creatures—and he had let all go. Now with the passing of Michelle the world was being stripped from him clean and clear.

Something slipped in the matter of Legère's reason. He was losing himself again. A great, whimpering moan was wrung from him, and he cast himself down again, and he hugged the body of the other close, and he talked to it in a low, endearing babble. He *begged* it not to leave him, he coaxed it, and—

A change had come. The feel of the other was heavier in his arms, more leaden. Legère gripped him close, choking. And then he tried to pray. In his agony of soul he pleaded strivingly with the God who was behind all life, he exhorted, he bargained.

But the spirit was passing in the thing in his arms, and in passing it seemed almost as though it functioned apart from the body.

"M'sieu' David!"

Legère clutched him close, mad in his efforts at warmth. And Jo spoke again, quite clearly. "It is all warm now, *mon vieux!* And it is time to tell thee—that which I never have. The black one, Budro, killed thy father, when thou wert little.

"I—Jo—was there on the beach that day and saw him throw away the compass, and start the boat's seams. I, too, owed him the same debt as thou, and, always, I, too, meant to repay. But, now—I—Jo—tell thee—that thou—must—"

Beyond all doubt it was Jo's message to say: "Thou must leave him to a power higher than thou," but the spirit was gone before the words were said.

In the searching cold, Legère lay deadened—long, long—his body stilled, his mind, only, flaming. And a drowsiness came stealing upon him, a drowsiness as of something touching him soothingly from afar.

It was the drowsiness of his freezing blood. And he knew it. And now instead of soothing him, it stung him to fight with every atom of his dwindling life—he was never to be soothed again, by anything.

All his new-made resolutions were wiped out in a flash at what Jo had told him. He was down again, down at the bottom of life, down with the brute, and like the brute he lived now only to kill.

He struggled viciously, and slowly feeling came back. Now, the body in his arms was quite stiff. His own hands clasped behind its back felt gone from the wrists. He wrenched and fought himself clear.

He knew only that he must move, and keep moving. He turned and fumbled the little seal out from its covert. His hands were still numb and dead. A

moment later the little creature lay slaughtered on the ice, and the man was holding his half-frozen hands, thrust deep for warmth in the steaming carcass.

Life came back. He made it. Saul Budro wavered and danced before his eyes like a jerking manikin. Saul Budro it was who had brought him, Legère, to this—beginning with the day he had killed his father. Saul Budro had been the cause behind all the suffering of his life.

And now Legère was seeing red, seeing only the thing of bodily vengeance. "Damn him!" he croaked, impotently. "This ice country can't hold me now. It can't! And when I get out I'll hunt Saul Budro to his black end!"

He raised his wet hands in the gray and ashes of the twilight. They glistened blackly. They were symbolic.

In five minutes Legère was on his way back in the direction of the abandoned sealer's boat. By dawn he had found it. Two days later he was making south among the floes, working his way toward the path of the steam sealers.

CHAPTER VI

LEGÈRE RETURNS

IT was the last of March.

David Legère was back in St. Anne's.

No one knew when he had come; one morning a dumfounded boatman had seen smoke coming from the Legère chimney at the end of the village, and had told of it. And he reported also a strange-style net boat on the shore.

It was an odd, heavy-built boat. It was battered and scarred. Its upper streaks were stove in—some of them.

Then Legère was seen. Even at a distance the boatmen crossed themselves. He was a great, gaunt scarecrow of a man. He padded unhurriedly about the Legère place like a wolf—a wolf that had come through a long, hard winter. But even at that there was something hard and unconquerable about him; a fearless directness that a wolf never had. No one braved his presence, after—things.

In a week he was on every tongue. He seemed now to be living a life that was a consummate waiting. He sat much on the rocks in the lee, when the sun was warm. He sat hunched and motionless, like a great cormorant. He seldom moved except to shift along into the sun. He kept his great back in the sun always. And the fire never went out in the Legère cottage. And when the sun slanted too far down, the man went in and sat by the fire. And he devoured great rations of food—often.

He seemed entirely oblivious to St. Anne's.

In the village, life was starting sluggishly. Spring

had begun early; along the coast the course would soon be clear. Outside crafts were beginning to come in.

Among the villagers, Saul Budro had gone overland to Quebec. Now that traffic was well-nigh open, he was expected back soon to finish building.

Gowdy, Doan & Robertson had not opened their store. Many of the fishermen were gone from St. Anne's. Their cottages were empty. Narcisse Comeau was considering moving away; he had talked to Father André about it.

And Father André—for weeks Father André had been grievously disturbed within by a certain matter, and only now had he regained his tranquillity. Weeks ago he had received a letter—a piteous, pleading letter from Quebec which perplexed him to deal with. It read:

REVEREND SIR:

I set myself to write you in all humility, on a matter that it seems has come to touch upon the well-being of my everlasting soul—

Here the letter snapped off in its sedate phraseology and burst forth with:

Ah, monsieur, for the love of the good God, will you not be kind—will you not let me have one word of tidings of David Legère! You forbade me St. Anne's, but I have suffered, monsieur—God knows how much! What I did I forced myself to do in the beginning, thinking to buy life with counterfeit, and it was not to be. But my love for this man was true, monsieur, was holy. I have tried to atone in work, unselfish work, but all winter it seems have I but fallen far short. It is not my destiny—this work, monsieur! This love that

possesses me thwarts it. It is a love not of the body, but of the soul—and David Legère, and he alone, is my destiny; for him I would willingly give life itself. Is it not then of God, this love that is willing to die for its loved one? And, this being true, who then dares stand in the way of it!

Ah, forgive me, monsieur. But sometimes it seems if I do not have one little word of him I must die. There are times when I am mad, *mad* to go to him. If that time ever came, and I returned to St. Anne's, would you sanction it?

Thine obedient,
JUSTINE DUCHARME.

And only now could Father André reply.

MY DAUGHTER:

Possibly it is Divine will that I should be of help. I have not been able to tell you of David Legère, since last fall he left St. Anne's, no man knew whither. I learn but to-day that he is back again, for which I thank the good God. Pray, yourself, for guidance, my daughter, and if, later in the year, God should send you to St. Anne's, come to me. I will try to guide you in the way of his will. My blessing upon you.

ANDRE LE BLANC.

And now Father André was looking forward to the time when he himself should see David Legère, and talk to him—looking forward eagerly, tremulously.

Meanwhile, Legère warmed himself and fed himself—and waited. His whole life now was an hourly waiting. That chance should fail to bring him his opportunity against his old enemy seemed unbelievable.

His waiting was not for long.

CHAPTER VII

THE SEA

THE sea was gathering itself in sublime majesty. It was April and a belated line gale was upon the north coast like a wolf.

For hours had the mighty forces latent in the world of waters been assembling, been rising, rushing—bursting, as though in experimental provision for grave affairs ahead. The dawn had come terrifyingly; heavy purple clouds had covered the eastern sky, split lengthwise above the horizon by a single long streak of blood red, as though the sky had been slashed through upon eternal fires; and there had followed a weird, misbegotten sunrise that crawled across the senses, leaving a trail of fear.

Early in the day a small steamer from down the coast had rounded the headland and lurched in to a providential mooring in the inner cove. Since then chaos had held upon the sea in stern reality.

One human being only seemed to be visible in the increasing gale. Over on the Legère shore site David Legère could be seen moving about the sheds and wharf of his fish stand.

All around outside the confusion and litter of the preceding fall was still as it had been left. The boiler stack had broken down from its fall; it lay along the shore above high-water mark and gathered rust; the refuse of lumber and material lay in jumbled heaps.

It began to rain. The wind whipped the cove from a cask and spun it afar. The empty barrels began to slide tentatively along in the gale.

Legère moved about swiftly making things secure. Suddenly he stopped. He stood in the lee, staring out upon the cove.

A lone messenger in a motor boat was laboring across the cove from Budro's Point. The seas licked it and tasted at it, and constantly appeared to swallow it. The gale now seemed to have a new triumph in it. The tide had just turned flood. Over his paltry chattels, Legère watched the man leave the boat and tear frenziedly up into the village.

A little later Legère saw another man out in the all-encompassing storm—a mere glimpse as he fled behind a sheltering building. Again. The man was making round shore in his own direction.

He was a strange-looking creature in the wind and rain, tall and thin and flapping-clad. Idly, Legère wondered why the wind didn't snap him up and blow him away. But now Legère stood still in interest.

The flying figure was out in the open again and making for *him*. At last Legère rushed forth and gripped him—Father André, the priest; the wind was scudding him relentlessly up the rocks. Legère bore him into the lee like a child.

It was the first time these two had seen each other. There was a majesty about the tall, slight figure. A sudden lull had fallen without. Then: "God is calling you, David Legère."

A contemptuous grunt, and Legère turned away. "He must be calling indeed loud, m'sieu', to be heard in this!"

"Cease!" The upraised hand was dignity immeasurable.

Legère was smiling almost indulgently. Something inside him was glad to see this man—foolishly glad. But he had shut it out, quickly.

He wondered now if the priest thought he really had anything to say that might affect him, Legère—

that might change the current of his determination. But he said: "What is it that He says, m'sieu'—your God?"

"He gives you a chance to reconcile yourself to Divine laws—to atone for your sin in turning your back upon Him. Remember, just so long as you fight God, just so long will you be beaten. He gives you another chance. It may be your last."

"I am quite content, m'sieu'." Legère stooped and tossed a plank across the shed with a resounding thwack.

The priest watched tensely. The face of Legère changed never a hair. Then: "A vessel is ashore off on Thread o' Life ledges. They will soon be covered by the sea. You, with your boat, are the only man in St. Anne's that might reach through this gale and save them."

Legère's face was unmoved, inscrutable. "Who saw them, m'sieu'?"

"From Budro's Point." There was a pause packed with great things. Then, "Saul Budro is aboard—the vessel is his."

The other's face leaped to vivid life. Back shot his head. His hand clutched high in empty air. He laughed—loud—long.

The priest held himself firm. "This is no time for mirth!"

"Oh—h—ho! There's Divine power behind things after all!" roared Legère.

"Will you go?"

"No! Oh, no! No. Why spoil such splendid planning? And Saul will die unshrive[n]!" gloated the other. "And that, to him, is torment forever! Oh, ho! It is to laugh!"

"Will you go?"

"No, no!" moaned Legère, in terrible mirth. "Oh," with a gasp, "I hope he tarries long in hell!"

"Hark ye!" sharply. "It is for his soul as well

as yours I'm fighting. You maimed and broke his body. Let God have his soul. And others are there—poor benighted aliens. Will you not consider them?"

"Oh, no, m'sieu'!" Legère still gasped. "How can you ask me—*me!* The Infidel of St. Anne's—to meddle my poor hand in such a splendid outcome? Ah, no, m'sieu'! It is not to be!"

Legère's eyes hardened. "I hope he rots on the bottom; and may the lobsters get his eyes!" He turned to pick up a salt bucket.

The priest braced himself. He began pulling together every force of his life to launch upon the other—and the other felt it and grinned, laconically.

"The hand of God is in this! Take heed, David Legère! You said: 'When the sea restores love and peace—then will I believe!' It will mean restored love of thy fellow man, peace for thy everlasting soul! Wilt break thy word?"

"What are words, m'sieu'?" smiling blandly. "The scriptures are full of them!"

The priest stared squarely at the other. His will surged through his body like fluid iron. He would conquer or die. "Thy father," he returned, sternly, "he founded this town on those words!"

"And like One Other, crucified, they cost him his life, m'sieu'!"

The priest winced, then drove straight back at his antagonist: "Hast forgotten thy father?"

The grin was gone. "No."

"You say 'no!' What, then, can his memory mean to such as his son! Tell me!"

A swift uneasiness stole upon Legère. He turned away coldly.

The priest clutched his arm. "Hold! Thy mother! She watches thee in this hour. What of her?"

A shaft, as of things somber, shot into Legère's eyes. Like a flash came the clean-cut vision of his

mother's pleading with him at the hour of her death. He wrenched himself clear. "We will not speak of her, m'sieu'!"

"But we will!" The priest's face glowed like an archangel; the voice drove on direct and clear above the howling wind outside: "For hark ye—it is thy mother's voice speaking through me. You denied her her death-bed plea, David Legère. Wilt do it yet again?"

His antagonist was staring blankly. Some terrible emotion was bursting the very heart of Legère. Through all these months of awful loneliness had striven the memory of his mother. Steadfast throughout every hour of his existence, he had come to know her the one thing of all his life that had never failed him for one instant.

The priest was speaking on. "This day thy mother's soul is in torment because of thee. Think upon it!"

In Legère now the surging in his heart was stifling him. And, clearly, as though spoken, his ears were hearing his mother's voice: "I'd like to know ye'd never be desertin' one of God's creatures when they needed ye——"

"Thy mother!" The priest's eyes were narrowing in their intensity. "Hast thought on how, for thee, she suffered in life, and on the day of her death?" His voice dropped suddenly. And now it came, infinitely gentle. "Can you torment her still—this mother who would gladly have died for thee?" He was silent.

The thing in Legère's heart had burst forth and rushed upon the forces of his will. It was a swift, terrible battle, and his will gave way. If the priest *should* be right! If his mother's soul *should* be in torment!

The beliefs of a lifetime suddenly rose and swamped all else. Slowly he raised his face. It

was stilled and quite gray, but in that one moment it had become the gentle, earnest face of the David Legère of old.

"I go, m'sieu'! But"—a thought had struck him, a little sadly, though not unpleasantly now—"but I have the feeling that we none of us come back."

The priest's face shone with the glory of God. His hand went upward in benediction. "Leave the rest to God, my son."

From a hundred shelters, every human being of St. Anne's watched the tiny boat creep through the paths of the sublimely moving sea. The little boat had been a craft of intense pride to its owner—a stanch little vessel with a marvel of an engine, which Legère had recently brought out from her shed and put into perfect order. Legère crouched low in her, as much a part of her as the engine—and more.

Out on the yet bare ledges, the schooner was driven among the rocks on a well-nigh even keel. The sails were gone clean from the bolt ropes. The rigging remained, to slit the wind into grim outcry; the vessel screamed—always—always—and never let up. The man from shore knew that on the flood her time was short—already the seas were licking her into wreckage. High up, a man's body clung to the rigging.

In the wild uproar a strange and infinite peace held in the tiny sanctuary of the little boat. For the first time in months all things in the soul of David Legère seemed stayed of their turmoil—seemed at rest. Swung and tossed like the merest atom, he yet knew a strange, almost unearthly security.

The little craft from land slid down the lofty seas into a livable quarter in the lee of the ledges. The boatman dropped an anchor astern to hold

the craft off the rocks, leaped into the sea and swam ashore with the painter.

He stood up. The wind swept cold upon the skin of his drenched body, as though it had been dipped in a volatile essence. Shattered water from the windward side of the great rocks fell about him like icy lava.

Each shock stung his spirit to a higher realm of its own, apart from his body. He was thinking again—thinking *clear*. This might be the end. The thought brought, not fear, but a feeling almost of relief.

He started forward. The two spars of the schooner showed above the ledges, curving like bows in the wind. Then something happened—near him. It seemed that a living thing had suddenly become visible among the rocks and had gone bounding past in the fury of spume. He looked and saw that the man's body was gone from the rigging. It left Legère strung taut.

He kept on. It happened again. Three other creatures appeared, dimly, stumbling crazily onward over the rocks. He could see now that these were Chinese. But oddly they, too, were passing him by.

The rescuer strode forth and caught one by the arm, shouting questions in his ear. But the thing in his grip was stark mad with terror. And he was pointing back to the ship, his lips moving frantically, and then tore himself away.

Half across the great ledges—realization of what it all meant struck the rescuer like a blow. He turned and ran back. It was as he knew; the castaways had taken the boat and left him.

Even as he looked, the boat appeared. The bulked figure of Saul Budro showed in the waist of her, and clinging along the stern line three black bobs—human heads like strung beads—trailed down the watery hill.

The solitary man left behind stood stock-still. This was the end. And this being so—

Slowly, wonderingly, he turned his head about, taking note of all the terrific turmoil about him. If this was the end, where was the terror? He felt not a shadow of it. It was very odd—the strange feeling of peace, of security, that held him completely, that lulled him like an anodyne.

He turned and forged back toward the vessel over the rocks and slime, his mind still busied with its own strange estate. Perhaps the answer was that death held no fear when one was actually on the threshold—that what was called the fear of death was fear of the *fear*.

His mind seized on the idea of “the threshold!” Soon he was to know. In his battling struggle against the gale, a little smile grew on his face—there was something tremendous in that thought, something wonderful beyond all fathoming—that soon he was to know more than every last man on all the earth knew—soon, very soon.

And God? One no longer challenged God when one was about to meet Him in His own domain. And now, it was very strange, but somehow or other, even with death facing him, he was glad he had come—that he had given in at last. He was weary, terribly weary of the struggle, and his having relented might help when he had crossed “the threshold!”

Legère struggled on. About him the world seemed tearing up. Every succeeding burst of the sea roared higher and higher in tremendous explosions. Kelp and rockweed hanging from the rocks at his feet swept about him in weird, violent-swaying life in the boiling surge, only to settle back with each recoil, black and wet, and hissing.

He caught the bow chains of the schooner,

climbed to the bowsprit and stood clinging to the rigging. His scant clothing was sucked tight to his body like another skin; the wind upon him stung to exhilaration no longer—there was a raw, deadening kill to it.

He clung fast, sweeping the wreckage far along on deck with his eyes—noting the swift dissolution of Saul Budro's craft at the touch of the sea. It was a little saddening, after all.

He moved onward along the deck, clinging, battling. A great sea lifted the whole vessel. She grounded heavily. A sharp list, and an avalanche of gear stormed down the deck in a wild torrent.

David Legère's body shot rigid. His mind flashed blank to all things of life or death. Along the deck, now cleared, he saw a small sodden mass of beaten humanity that was wedged between the water casks. A still, little face of deathly pallor glimmered there, and out of it two great, dark eyes looked into his with the deep, utter calmness of a finished destiny.

It was Justine Ducharme, stretching pleading hands to the man on the rail.

Legère dropped in the sluicing seas and drove his body to her side, and crouching low in the uproar he could hear: "It seems we are to die, my David, so thou canst believe I speak the truth. God has given me no peace, neither day nor night, for the love I carried away from this place. And I hid aboard my uncle's vessel till she was out to sea to get back to thee."

"I love thee, my David; I have always loved thee better than life itself." She clutched his head close to her bosom. "And, loving thee so, I am glad to die with thee!"

The foundations of David Legère's being rocked. Life, the life of the body, of cold and wet, of

raging elements, had passed clean from consciousness. He was living wholly in spirit, detached, free from all material things, and he was seeing clear.

This was the answer! He had been but an atom in the working of eternal law, a rebellious atom which had brought only untold suffering to itself. And this one time that he had yielded had already brought a wonderful, an amazing reward—for love had come back; love, the very fountain of life!

He buried his face madly in the girl's sheltering arms as he thought of what would have happened if he had *not* yielded. Love had come back, and the sea had brought it!

He leaped erect. It was *life*, wild unconquerable life that tore through him. Death could never have him now!

He snatched up the drenched little creature and was over the side. Down on the ledges he leaped over the precarious footing with a dexterity to stun. He carried her over to the lee side and set her down beneath the rocks. He was gone.

Thrice he came back with wreckage, with spars and ropes, and lashed all together in the fury of his great strength. Then he bound the girl's body tight to his own.

A great, green mountain of toppling water flicked them off the raft like flies. The girl found her mouth and nostrils pressed tight to the firm cold flesh of the man's chest in the roaring world of water; held there—held until the fading life within her fought madly, instinctively. Then a brief instant when all the universe seemed a matter of wildly laboring lungs—

Again the close, terrible struggle; a besieging, roaring chaos, full of blinding lights and snapping

things, and stretching on into eternity. Then a weak little sucking at the tiny moment of ensuing freedom.

Again there came a rushing blackness.
Oblivion.

CHAPTER VIII

“BLEST BE THE SEA”

MORNING.

Men gleaned awestruck along the shore. There was massed and varied wreckage. There were loose, jumbled logs, and great tangled fragments of solid wharf structure—puny playthings of the sea. There were the remains of Legère's motor boat, once a marvel of man's artifice, wantonly strewn apart as though in whimsical jest.

In a black pool beside it, all gripped in a tangle of kelp things, was pitched something that had once been human—a big man among men, made carrion by the sea—Saul Budro. On the outer shore of the cove the new structure of Budro that had occupied the site of the Golden Hope had vanished clean; the tide ran smoothly over the sands of its channel as of old.

Beyond all lay the pacified sea, tranquilly inscrutable as of ages.

David Legère had survived. No man knew how he could have accomplished it, but he had reached shore with the girl. A knot of men approached him as he stood on the shore. They had come ashore from the steamer that had ridden out the gale in the cove.

Tod Robertson led. He put out his hand to Legère. “Before you say anything, Legère—no matter what you may have been told about my part in things, I, myself have been with you always. I'm here to prove it now.”

Legère looked once at the thin, pale face which seemed to have grown so much older, and took the hand warmly. Never again could he be deceived in a man, and this man was *true*.

Robertson turned and introduced a companion. "This is our Mr. Doan, Legère. Our senior, Eleazer Gowdy, died in the winter. Mr. Doan here seems to think pretty much as I do about St. Anne's and things in general. He's in on this thing, too."

The stranger smiled gravely. "You've put up a good fight, my friend. But you've won. I've taken things up with the railroad myself, and now they're anxious to come." He stared a warm moment into the other's eyes. "No one can stay the wheel of progress, young man—God never intended it. The greatest thing we all can do is to put our shoulder behind it, and push!"

A moment later Robertson hooked his hand in Legère's arm and turned him away. "I saw Miss Ducharme in Quebec, Legère. I had been telling her about you, and I learned afterward she sent you money, fifteen hundred dollars—the check passed through the store." A soft silence, then: "Her love for you is a pretty big thing, I feel sure. Love always is—that."

Robertson looked away out across the sea, and his lids blinked rapidly on swimming moisture, burning in his eyes. He spoke slowly, reminiscently. "It's funny, old man, how love can put you—oh, I don't know—sort of in sympathy, in understanding with the rest of the world. And, God knows, sometimes there seems to be so much world, and such a little, little love to—to go round."

Evening.

Sunset and moonrise; stillness; beauty; and peace unutterable. The sky in the west was a great pink

petal, splashed and painted lavishly in the wanton chalice design of gorgeous tulips. Against the background were shafts and javelins of crimson and scarlet, flying across the glow like weapons of flame.

Lower down lay tumbled, lurid masses of ignited clouds—the sun departing in chariots of fire. Lower still all was mauve and purple, and the outline of the land was tempered to softest gray and dove. Reflecting all, was the sea; a gleaming floor of purest gold that gave back everything, kind for kind.

A man and a girl sat stilled up on a headland, in the peaceful *calvaire* of a great new-erected cross. The girl spoke.

"It is strange, *mon ami*, the ways of the good God. Behold!" She raised her hand and pointed to where the half-built construction of Saul Budro on the site of the weir, a shifting bottom after all, had been battered into a hundred fragments and strewn along the shore. "The sea has brought retribution and given thee justice. It has given thee back thy Golden Hope site all clean as it was in the first, and there is none left to dispute it."

"And see, dost thou take in the strangeness of it?" She pointed below to where the crude fish-stand construction of the man rested as secure among its rocks as before. "There, beyond all doubt, is a well-proven site for thy terminal. The sea has shown thee that; thou wouldest never have known else."

The bell for vespers came pulsating about them from the church up on the slope. The man rose. Trained and tried and tempered, David Legère stood tall and strong and splendid in the golden light—the invincible, perfected pioneer.

"It has done more than all that," he said. "It

has given me a new love to replace the old, and I have a vow to fulfill. Come."

Reverently he led her up the slope, up where the little church of St. Anne's shone like a jewel in its spruce-clad hollow, its little cross of gleaming gold uplifted bravely upon the sea.

THE END.

